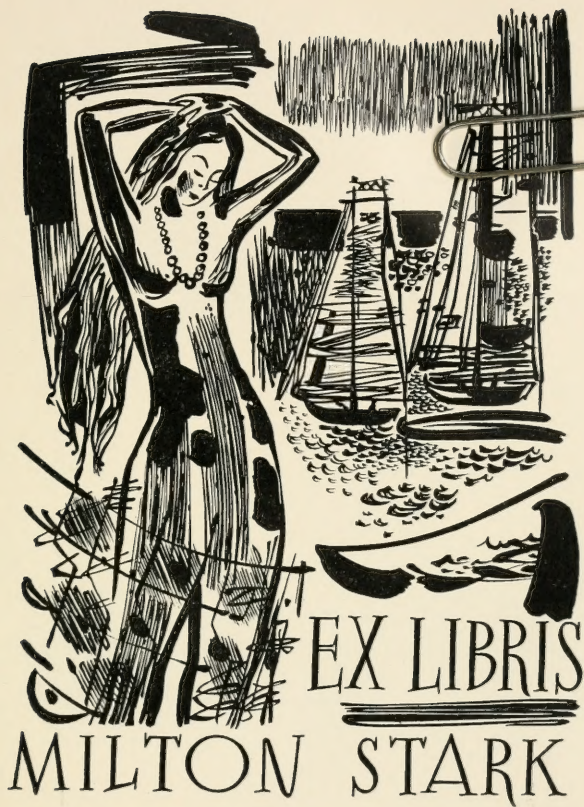


Behind A Mask





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Behind a Mask

Or Numa Roumestan

By
Alphonse Daudet.

Translated from the French by Virginia Champlin.



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BEHIND A MASK

OR

NUMA ROUMESTAN.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE AMPHITHEATRE.

ONE extremely hot Sunday in July a grand *fête* was held in the amphitheatre at Aps in Provence, on the occasion of an agricultural fair. All the town was present, — the weavers from Chemin-Neuf, the aristocracy from the Quartier de la Calade, and even people from Beaucaire, at least fifty thousand in number according to the “Chronicle of the Forum” of the next day. The Southern manner of exaggeration, however, should be taken into consideration. The truth is, that a crowd was massed together in tiers on the burning-hot steps of the old amphitheatre, as in the palmy days of the Antonines. But the *fête* of the Comitia had nothing to do with the overflow of people. Something more than the Landaises races, the contests for men of different stature, the games of *étrangle-chat* and *saut sur l’outre*, the competitions with flutes and tambourines, and the local exhibitions, older than the reddened stone of the arena, was necessary to induce the crowd to remain standing for two hours on those glaring flag-stones, in that overpowering, blinding sun, while

breathing in, as it were, at every breath, flames and dust smelling of gunpowder, and running the risk of ophthalmia, sunstrokes, violent fevers, and all the dangers and tortures of what is called in that region a noonday *fête*.

The great attraction of the meeting was Numa Roumestan.

Ah ! the proverb that says, "No one is a prophet in his own land," is certainly true of artists and poets, whose compatriots are always the last to recognize their superiority, which is quite ideal, and without visible effect ; but it cannot be applied to statesmen, to persons distinguished in politics or agriculture, or to those profitable celebrities who deal out favors and influence, and reflect their lustre in blessings of all kinds upon the town and its inhabitants. For ten years the great Numa, the deputy-leader of the Right, has been a prophet in the land of Provence ; for ten years this illustrious son of the town of Aps has received the tender demonstrations of a mother of the South, lavish in manifestations, applause, and caresses, and emphatic in gesticulation. As soon as he arrives in summer, after the vacation of the Chamber begins, and at the very moment he appears at the station, ovations begin. Orpheons are there, their embroidered banners swelling at the vibrations of their heroic choruses ; and porters, seated on the steps, wait until the wheels of the family carriage which comes for the leader have turned round three times between the broad plane-trees of the Avenue Berchère, then place themselves in the shafts, and draw the great man amid cheers and lifted hats to the Portal mansion, where he alights. This enthusiasm in the ceremony of arrival has so passed into tradition, that the horses stop of their

own accord, as at a post-station, at the corner of the street where the porters are accustomed to unharness, and any amount of lashing with the whip will not make them stir a step. From the very first day the town becomes changed in appearance: it is no longer the dull prefecture, taking long siestas, and lulled by the shrill, drowsy cry of the locusts on the parched trees of the *Cours*. Even when the sun is highest, the streets and esplanade are lively with busy people in their best hats and black coats, which appear harsh to the eye in the strong light, while their convulsive gestures are reflected in sharply defined shadows against the white walls. The carriage of the bishop and that of the president make the road ring: then delegations from the faubourg where Roumestan is adored for his royalist convictions, and deputations of warpers, move along in bands the whole width of the boulevard, their heads boldly erect, and decked with the Arlesian ribbon. The inns are full of country people,—farmers from Camargue and Crau, whose unharnessed wagons encumber the small squares, and the streets of populous localities, as in market-days. At evening the crowded *cafés* remain open far into the night; and the windows of the *Club des Blancs*, lighted at an unusual hour, rattle at the ringing voice of the god.

Not “a prophet in his own country”? One need only to look at the amphitheatre beneath the intense blue sky on this Sunday of July, 1875, and observe the indifference of the public to what is passing within the circle, where every face is turned in the same direction, and where a cross-fire is sent from every eye to the same point,—the municipal platform where Roumestan is seated amid laced coats and trailing silks of every hue, and sun-

umbrellas used on ceremonious occasions. One need only to hear the speeches, the shouts of joy, and the innocent remarks made aloud by these good people of Aps; some speaking in Provençal, others in barbarous French made smooth with garlic, and all with that accent harsh as the sun of that region, that cuts short, and lays a stress on each syllable, and spares not a dot over an *i*.

"*Diou! qu'es bèou! Dieu, qu'il est beau!*"

("Heavens, how beautiful it is!")

"He has grown stouter since last year."

"He has a more imposing air."

"Do not push so: there is room for every one."

"Do you see our Numa, little one? When you grow up you can say that you have seen him, can't you?"

"He still has his Bourbon nose, and has not lost a tooth."

"And has no white hairs either."

"*Té pardi*. He is not so very old yet. He was born in '32, the year that Louis Philippe tore down the crosses of the Mission, *pécaïre*."

"Ah, that blackguard of a Louis Philippe!"

"He does not show his forty-three years."

"Certainly not. Ah, the beautiful angel!"

And, with a bold gesture, a tall girl with burning eyes sent him from afar a kiss that whistled through the air like the cry of a bird.

"Take care, Zette: what if his lady should see you?"

"Is his lady the one in blue?"

"No: the one in blue is his sister-in-law, Mlle. Hortense, a pretty young lady who has just left the convent, and already mounts a horse like a dragoon. Mme. Roumestan is more sedate, with a nobler bearing, and looks much more haughty. These Parisian ladies are very onceited."

In the picturesque boldness of their language, which was half Latin, the women, standing with their hands held as a screen over their eyes, picked to pieces in a loud voice the two Parisian ladies, their little travelling-hats, clinging dresses unadorned by jewels, in such strong contrast with the toilets of the place, where one saw gold chains, and green and red petticoats spread over very large bustles. The men enumerated the services rendered the good cause by Numa, his letter to the emperor, and his speech for the white flag. Ah ! if there had been a dozen like him at the Chamber, Henry the Fifth would long ago have been on the throne.

Excited by this talk, and stirred by the inspiring enthusiasm, the good Numa could not keep still. He fell back in his broad arm-chair, his eyes closed, and his face beaming with joy, and threw himself from one side of it to the other, then jumped up, crossed the tribune with long strides, bent over a moment towards the circle, drank in the light and the shouting, and then returned to his place with a jovial, free-and-easy manner. With his cravat unfastened, and with his back and the soles of his boots turned to the crowd, he kneeled, and spoke to the Parisian ladies behind and above him, and tried to communicate his joy to them.

Mme. Roumestan was bored : it was evident from an expression of absent-mindedness and indifference on her face, which was marked by beautiful lines and a rather haughty coldness, when it was not lighted by the spiritual radiance of a pair of pearl-like gray eyes, those of a true Parisian woman, and her mouth with its dazzling teeth was not parted in a smile.

The Southern gayety, characterized by turbulence and familiarity, of this wordy, demonstrative, and superficial

race, whose natures were the very opposite of her own, which was so self-contained and serious, grated on her sensibilities : perhaps, unconsciously to herself, she met again in them the multiplied and vulgarized type of the man by whose side she had lived ten years, and whom to his loss she had learned to know. The sky, intense in its brilliancy and reflected heat, no longer charmed her. How could all these people manage to breathe? Where did they get breath enough for such shouts? And aloud she dreamed of a pretty Parisian sky, gray and overcast by a fresh April shower which caused the sidewalks to glitter.

"O Rosalie ! how can you say so?" exclaimed her sister and husband indignantly ; her sister in particular, a tall young girl blooming with life and health, who in order to see better drew herself up to her full height. This was her first visit to Provence ; and yet one could but think that all this confusion of shouts and gestures beneath an Italian sky was stirring within her some secret fibre, some stifled instinct. Her Southern blood was revealed by her long eyebrows meeting over her houri-like eyes, and by her pale complexion on which summer never left a blush.

"Come, now, my dear Rosalie," said Roumestan, who was eager to convince his wife, "stand up and look. Has Paris ever shown you any thing like it?"

In the vast theatre enlarged into an ellipse, and outlining a large patch of blue, thousands of faces were pressed closed together on the many rows of benches, bright eyes forming luminous points of light which mingled with the varied reflections and brilliancy of festal toilets and picturesque costumes. From thence, as from a huge vat, ascended joyous shouts, ringing voices and

trumpets, volatilized, as it were, by the intense light of the sun. Though hardly distinct on the lower steps, which were dim and dusty with sand and many breaths, these sounds were accentuated when they were detached, and ascended into the pure air.

Above all rose most distinctly the cry of venders of milk-biscuit, bearing from step to step their baskets draped with white linen, — “*Li pan ou la, li pan ou la.*” The venders of fresh water, balancing their green and varnished jugs, made one thirsty when listening to their gulping, “*L’aigo es fresco, quau voù beùre?*” “The water is fresh, who wishes to drink?” Then, at the very top, children running and playing on the crest of the arena crowned this grand hubbub with sharp sounds as high as martinets soar in the kingdom of birds. Over all what an admirable play of light, when, the day advancing, the sun turned slowly around the vast amphitheatre as on the disk of a sun-dial, driving back and crowding into the zone of the shadow the people, who left vacant the places most exposed to the strong heat, spaces of reddish slabs separated by dried grasses and blackened by successive conflagrations ! At times on the upper tiers a stone becoming loosened rolled from tier to tier amid cries of terror, and crowding of the people, as if the whole circle was crumbling : then there was a rapid movement on the seats, like the assault of a cliff by the sea in its fury ; for among that exuberant, impressionable race, effect is never proportionate to the cause, which is magnified by their perceptions and imagination. Thus peopled and animated, the ruins seemed to be alive again, and lost their appearance of a cicerone’s show-building. When looking at it one had the sensation given by a strophe of Pindar recited by a modern Athe-

nian, which is a dead language revived without a cold scholastic character. This sky so pure, this sun like molten silver; these Latin intonations preserved here and there, especially in the small places, in the Provençal idiom; the attitudes of some standing in archways with motionless poses which in the glimmering air seemed antique and almost like the work of a sculptor, and were a type of the place, their heads appearing as if struck off on medals; the short arched nose, the broad shaven cheeks, and the turned-up chin of Roumestan,—all together completed the illusion of a Roman spectacle, even to the lowing of Landaise cows, which echoed through vaults from which formerly lions and elephants came forth to combat. Thus when above the circle, empty and covered with sand, the very large black hole of the *podium* covered by a skylight opened, people expected to see wild beasts leap forth instead of the quiet and rural procession of beasts and people crowned at the fair.

It was now the turn of the harnessed mules, which were led in by hand. They were covered with rich Provençal harness, and held high their little sharp heads, which were adorned with silver bells, pompons, knots of ribbon, and plumes. They had no fear of the heavy, clear-cutting strokes of the whip, like fire-crackers and serpents, or of the muleteers who stood on each animal. Every village recognized its laureates among the crowd, and greeted them in a loud voice: "Here is Cavaillon. There is Maussane." The long, gay procession unwound all around the arena, which it filled with a sparkle and clinking of luminous bells, and stopped before the box of Roumestan, making the strokes of the whip and the bells accord a moment in his honor, and then continued its winding march, under the direction of a fine cavalier

in light-colored tights and high boots, one of the gentlemen of the club who planned the *fête*, and spoiled every thing without suspecting it by mingling the provinces with the Provence, and by giving to this curious local spectacle the vague appearance of a Franconi cavalcade.

But, with the exception of a few country people, no one looked at them. People had eyes only for the municipal platform, which in a moment had become invaded by a crowd of persons who had come to salute Numa. It comprised his friends, clients, and former college-chums, who were proud of their intimacy with the great man, and eager to show it on these boards in full sight. The wave flowed on uninterruptedly. There were old and young men; country gentlemen in complete gray from their gaiters to their little hats; overseers of workshops in Sunday attire, with their long coats creased in the folds; farm-superintendents in round vests from the suburbs of the Aps; and a pilot from Port St. Louis twirling his big convict's cap: all of them having the marks of the South upon their faces, which were covered to the very eyes by those violet-ebony beards which the paleness of Oriental complexions makes blacker still, or were closely shaven after the fashion of ancient France. They were short-necked people, ruddy and perspiring, like terra-cotta vases, with black, blazing, prominent eyes, with familiar gestures and freely using "thou."

As Roumestan received them without noting distinction of fortune or birth, with the same profuse demonstrations, he greeted them with "*Té! M. d'Espalion,*" and, "How are you, Marquis? — *Hé-bé!* my old Cabantous! how is piloting? — M. le Président Bédarride, accept my cordial greeting." These greetings were

accompanied by hand-shaking, embraces, and those hearty slaps on the shoulder which double the value of words that are always too cold to express Southern sympathy. The conversation, however, did not last long. The leader half listened, and looked with inattentive eyes, and, while talking, said good-day with his hands to the new-comers; but no one became angry at his brusque manner of dismissal with the kind words, "Well, well, I will take care of it. Present your demands. I will lay them before ——." They were official promises of tobacco-shops. He divined even what was not asked, and encouraged and awakened timid ambitions. "No medals, my old Cabantous, after saving life twenty times? Send me your papers. They adore me in the navy department. We will repair this injustice." His voice rang out warm and metallic; and, as his words fell from his lips sharp and clear, one would have fancied them new gold pieces rolling forth. Every one went away delighted with this brilliant coin, and descended the platform with the beaming brow of the scholar carrying away his prize. What was most noticeable in this strange man was his wonderful way of assuming most naturally and unconsciously the manner and tone of the people to whom he spoke, — an impressive, frank, and simple air with President Bédarride, with his arm extended like a magistrate, as if he were shaking his toga at the bar; a martial air, and wearing his hat like a combatant, when speaking to the Colonel de Roche-maure; his hands in his pockets, and his legs curved, and shoulders rolling like those of an old sea-dog, with Cabantous. From time to time, between the greetings, radiant, and wiping his steaming forehead, he returned to his Parisian ladies.

"But, my good Numa," said Hortense in a low voice, with a pretty laugh, "when will you secure them all the tobacco-shops you have promised them?"

Roumestan leaned over his big head with his crinkly hair, somewhat thinned on the top, and whispered, —

"They are promised, little sister ; not given."

And, divining a reproach in his wife's silence, he added, "Do not forget that we are in the South, among compatriots, and speaking the same language. All these worthy fellows know the worth of a promise, and expect their tobacco-shops no more than I expect to give them. Only they talk of it because it amuses them, and gives wings to their imagination. Why deprive them of this joy? Besides, you see, among Southerners words never have more than a relative meaning. It is merely putting things in a favorable light ;" which, as the expression pleased him, he repeated two or three times with an emphasis on "favorable light."

"I like these people," said Hortense, who was really much amused ; but Rosalie was not convinced. "Words, however, mean something," she murmured very seriously, as if in the innermost depths of her being she were speaking to herself.

"My dear, that depends on latitudes," said Roumestan, confirming his paradox with a movement of the shoulder peculiar to him, and like the forward movement of a pedler putting on his strap. The great orator of the Right retained some habits like this, of which he had never been able to rid himself, and which, had he been in any other party, would have made him pass for a man of the common classes ; but on the aristocratic heights where he reigned, between Prince d'Anhalt and the Duke de la Rochetaillade, it was a sign of power and

great originality, and the Faubourg St. Germain raved about this movement of the shoulder on the rounded back which bore the hopes of the French monarchy. If Mme. Roumestan had formerly shared the illusions of this faubourg, she had ceased to do so now, to judge by her disenchanted look, and the slight smile which curled her lip as the leader went on speaking, — a smile paler even with melancholy than disdain. But her husband left her, suddenly attracted by the strange music which arose from the arena amid the noise of the crowd that was standing, and enthusiastically shouting, “Valmajour, Valmajour !”

Victorious in the competition of the evening before, the famous Valmajour, the first tambourinist in Provence, came to greet Numa with his prettiest airs.

Truly Valmajour standing in the middle of the circle, with his vest of yellow worsted serge over his shoulder, and with a belt of bright red making sharp outlines against the white linen around his loins, was handsome. He held his long, light tambourine suspended from his left arm by a strap, and with the left hand bore to his lips a small fife, while with the right hand and leg held forward he played his tambourine confidently.

Although very small, this fife filled the air around like the ringing of locusts, and was well fitted to this limpid, crystalline atmosphere, where every thing vibrates : the tambourine with its deep voice sustained the song and its variations. At the sound of this sharp, wild music, more than by all that he had seen since he had been there, Roumestan saw rise before him his childhood, when he was a Provençal lad, running about at rural *fêtes*, and dancing under the leafy plane-trees in the village squares, in the white dust of the broad roads, and in the

lavender of the parched hillsides. A pleasant emotion brightened his eyes ; for notwithstanding his forty years, and a political life that was very wearing, he still preserved, by the favor of nature, great imagination and that outward appearance of sensibility which deceives one as to the true background of character. Then this Valmajour was not an ordinary tambourinist, one of those common fiddlers who pick up ends of quadrilles and refrains of concert saloons in country festivals, and lower their instrument to tune it to modern taste. The son and grandson of a tambourinist, he never played other than national airs sung by grandmothers over cradles, and knew them well, and did not weary of them. After the Christmas carols set to music in minuets and rigadoons, he played the King's March to which Turenne in the grand century conquered and burned the Palatinate. Along the steps where trills ran just now like murmurs of flitting bees, the electrified crowd kept time with their arms and heads, following the superb rhythm, which like a gust of the mistral swept along through the deep silence of the amphitheatre where was heard only the whizzing sound of the bewildered swallows whirling in circles high above, in the blue sky paling to green, restless and charmed as if in that wide space they were seeking what invisible bird was uttering the shrill notes.

When Valmajour had finished, the wildest applause burst forth. Hats and handkerchiefs were tossed into the air. Roumestan called the musician to the platform, and threw himself upon his neck. "You have made me weep, my worthy fellow," he said, pointing to his large golden-brown eyes moist with tears. Feeling proud at finding himself surrounded by embroidery and official ivory swords, he accepted those congratulations and

greetings without very great embarrassment. He was a fine fellow, with regular features, a high forehead, and a beard and mustache of lustrous black against a swarthy complexion, — one of those proud peasants of the valley of the Rhône, who have none of the artful humility of the villagers in the central regions.

Hortense immediately observed how delicate his hand looked, notwithstanding its coating of sunburn. She looked at the tambourine and its stick with an ivory knob, and was astonished at the lightness of the instrument, that had been in the family two hundred years, and whose walnut case, ornamented with light carving, and polished, thin, and sonorous, seemed as if it had grown pliant as time had colored it. She particularly admired the *galoubet*, the quaint rustic flute with three stops of the ancient tambourinists, to which Valmajour had returned out of respect for tradition, and the handling of which he had mastered by dint of skill and patience. There was nothing more touching than the little story he told of his struggles and victory. "It came to me," he said in his odd French, "at night while listening to the nightingale. I thought to myself, What! Valmajour, there is a bird created by the good God, whose throat answers for any kind of roulade; and what he does with one stop, cannot you do with the three stops of your flute?" He spoke deliberately, with a fine timbre in his voice, which was reliant and sweet, for he had no fear of incurring ridicule. Besides, no one would have dared to smile at the enthusiasm of Numa, who raised his arms, and stamped enough to break in the platform. "How handsome he is! What an artist!" he exclaimed. And after him the mayor, the general, President Bédarride, M. Roumavage, a great beer-manufacturer of Beaucaire, and the vice-

consul of Pérou incased in a carnival costume of silver, and others besides, led on by the authority of the leader, repeated in tones of conviction, "What an artist!" It was also the opinion of Hortense; and she expressed it in her ardent manner, "Oh, yes, a great artist!" while Mme. Roumestan murmured, "But you will turn the poor fellow's head." It hardly appeared possible, however, judging by the quiet air of Valmajour, who was not even moved when hearing Numa say to him abruptly, —

"Come to Paris, boy, and your fortune is made."

"Oh! my sister would never give her consent," he answered with a smile. His mother was dead; and he lived with his father and sister on a farm which bore their name, three leagues from Aps, on the Cordova mountain. Roumestan swore to call upon him before leaving. He would speak to his relations, and was sure of bringing it about. "I will help you, Numa," said a youthful voice behind him.

Valmajour bowed without speaking a word, turned on his heels, and descended the broad carpeted platform, his box on his arm, and head erect, with the light swaying motion of the Provençal, that lover of music and the dance. Below, comrades were awaiting him, and clasped his hands. Then the cry went up, "*The farandole!*" which was received by loud shouting, prolonged by the echo of the arches in the passages from which seemed to come the shade and coolness that now filled the arena and diminished the power of the sun. Instantly the circle became filled, even to overflowing the railing, with a crowd from the village, — a mass of white fichus, glaring skirts, velvet ribbons fluttering from lace caps, embroidered blouses, and woollen jackets. At a rattling of the tambourine, the throng fell into line, and filed off into bands with legs

stiffened and hands clasped. A trill from the *galoubet* made the whole circle vibrate ; and the *farandole*, led off by a tall fellow from Barbantane, the country of famous dancers, began its slow march, unwinding its rings, and forming its figures almost on one spot, filling with the confused noise of breathing, and the rustling of apparel, the opening where gradually it was lost to view. Valmajour followed with an even, solemn step, and while marching pushed his big tambourine from his knee, and played louder as the closely packed people in the arena, that was already bathed in the dim blue of twilight, unwound like a gold-and-silk bobbin.

“ Look above,” said Roumestan all at once.

It was the head of the line of dancers pouring in between the arches on the first story, while the tambourinist and the last dancers of the *farandole* were still moving about in the circle. On the way the winding procession was made longer by all those whom the rhythm led as by force to follow it. Who among those Provençals could have resisted Valmajour’s magic flute? Borne on, and sounding louder by the beating of the tambourine, passing the railings and open air-holes, and rising above the cries and exclamations of the crowd, it was heard on every story at once. The *farandole* went higher and higher, and reached the upper galleries, where the sun still left an edge of tawny light. The long line of grave dancers bounding along, and defined on the high arched bays of the tier, in the warm, vibrating air of this declining day in July, became a succession of delicate silhouettes, and formed against the old stone an animated bas-relief such as projects from the dilapidated front of temples.

Below on the empty platform, — for people were leav-

ing, and there was more space between the dancers above the empty steps, — the good Numa said to his wife, as he threw a small lace shawl over her shoulders to protect her from the evening air, —

“Tell me, is it not beautiful?”

“Very beautiful,” answered the Parisian lady, moved this time to the depths of her artistic nature.

The great man from Aps seemed prouder of this approbation than of the noisy homage which had nearly stunned him for two hours.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRONG SIDE OF A GREAT MAN.

NUMA ROUMESTAN was twenty-two when he came to Paris to conclude his law-studies begun at Aix. He was at this time a fine fellow, joyous and noisy, with a bright color in his cheeks, with handsome, golden-brown, and prominent batrachian eyes, and with black frizzly hair like a visorless felt cap concealing half of his forehead. There was not the trace of an idea or ambition beneath this invading, fur-like mass.

He was a true Aps student, very strong at billiards and *misti*, without an equal in drinking a bottle of champagne *à la régalaide*,¹ or in chasing a cat by torch-light, until three o'clock in the morning, in the broad streets of the old aristocratic and parliamentary town; but interested in nothing, never opening a newspaper or book, and incrustated with that provincial folly that shrugs its shoulders at every thing, and adorns its ignorance with the reputation of great good sense.

The Latin Quarter stimulated him somewhat, without much reason, however. Like all his compatriots, Numa on arriving installed himself at the Café Malmus, a high, noisy, shabby, old building, which displayed three stories of glass windows broad as those of a fancy-goods store, on the corner of the Rue Four St.-Germain, which it filled with the noise of billiard-playing, and the shouting

¹ Drinking without letting the bottle touch the lips.

of its barbaric patrons. There all Southern France, with its various shades, was in full bloom. One could find there the Gascon South, the Provincial South, from Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseilles; the Périgourdin, Auvergnat, Ariégeois, Ardéchois; and the Pyrenean South, with terminations in "*as, us, and ac*," high-sounding, sonorous, and barbarous, such as Etcheverry, Terminarias, Bentaboulech, and Laboulbène; hard-sounding names, which seemed to be shot out of the mouth of a blunderbuss, or hurled forth as from the explosion of a mine. What loud voices, if only a half-cup of something were asked for! What noisy, hearty laughter, like the tumbling of a cart-load of stones! and what huge, stubbly, and black beards with bluish reflections, that defied a razor, and reached to the eyes, joined the eyebrows, and stood out stiffly from the broad, dilated, horse-like nose, and from the ears, without succeeding in concealing the youth and innocence of the good faces beneath!

After the studies, which they assiduously followed, these students passed their time at Malmus', forming into groups according to the provinces or parishes from which they came, around tables long reserved for them, which in the echo from their marble tops must have preserved the accent of the country as desks preserve the signatures carved by the knives of collegians.

There were only a few women in this horde, — only two or three poor girls on a story, whom their ashamed lovers brought there, and with whom they passed the evening before a glass of bock. Leaning over the large cartoons in the picture-papers, they were silent and out of place among the youth from the South, who were taught to despise women, *dou fémélan*. Mistresses, *pardi, té*, they knew where to find them. Bullier, the shouting and

singing, and the suppers at the *rôtisseuse*, did not tempt them. They preferred to remain at Malmus, talk *patois*, and waddle between the *café*, school, and *table-d'hôte*. If they passed the bridges, it was to go to the Théâtre Français to some performance of the stock-company, for the race is classic by birth : they went boisterously through the street in numbers, but felt rather intimidated at heart, and returned silent and out of breath, their eyes dim with tragic dust, to have another game by the lowered gas-light, behind closed shutters. From time to time, when there is an examination, an improvised feast will pervade the *café* with odors of garlic-stews and strong mountain cheeses in blue paper. There the new diploma-bearer would take from the rack his pipe marked with his initials, and would go away as a notary or substitute to some distant out-of-the-way place beyond the Loire, and talk of Paris to people in the provinces, — that Paris which he thought he knew, and which he had never really entered.

In these hardened surroundings, Numa was easily regarded as a superior man. In the first place, he shouted louder than the others ; then a superiority, or at least originality, was imputed to him because of his very lively taste for music. Two or three times a week he bought a seat in the pit at the opera or at Les Italiens, and returned with his mouth full of recitatives and grand airs, which he sang in a voice rebellious to all discipline. When he arrived at Malmus, and advanced in a theatrical manner among the tables, rolling out some Italian finale, he was received with shouts of joy from every story : “*Hé*, the artist !” they cried ; and, as in bourgeois localities, this word brought a fawning curiosity into women’s eyes, and envious and ironical comments to the lips of men. This artistic reputation after a while served him in

the way of influence in business. Even to-day, there is not an artistic commission at the Chamber, a project of popular opera, or of reform in the exhibitions of paintings, in which the name of Roumestan does not figure in the first line. It is well known in the theatres devoted to singing. He visited them with assurance, the ways of an actor, and a certain manner of posing in a three-quarters view when speaking to the lady at the desk, which made his astonished comrades exclaim, "That Numa is a fine fellow." He showed the same ease at school; and though half prepared, for he was lazy and dreaded work and solitude, he passed tolerably brilliant examinations, thanks to his audacity and Southern subtilty, which always enabled him to discover the susceptible spot where a professor's vanity could be touched. Then his frank, amiable face served him, and his lucky star lighted the path before him.

As soon as he became a lawyer, his parents recalled him; the modest board they allowed him costing them too severe privations. But the prospect of going and shutting himself up in that dead city of the Aps, whose ancient ruins were falling into dust, with his life mapped out before him in an endless tour of the town and a few debates on party-walls, had nothing to tempt the undefined ambition which the Provençal felt underneath his taste for the stir and intelligence of Paris. With great difficulty he secured two years more to prepare for his degree; and then, when the irrevocable order to return to the country came to him, he met at the house of the Duchess of San-Donnino, at one of those musical *fêtes* where his pleasing voice and lyrical relations admitted him, the great Sagnier, the Legitimist lawyer, the music-mad brother of the duchess, who in his monotonous

worldly life was charmed by Numa's exuberance and by his enthusiasm for Mozart. Sagnier offered to take him as fourth secretary. The salary was nothing ; but he entered the most important business office in Paris, which was intimately connected with the Faubourg St. Germain and with the Chamber. Unfortunately the elder Roumestan persisted in cutting off his allowance, in trying through famine to bring back his only son, the lawyer of twenty-six, of an age to earn his living. It was then that the *café*-proprietor Malmus interposed.

This Malmus was a type, — a stout, pale, asthmatic man, who from a simple *café*-boy had, through credit and usury, become the proprietor of one of the largest establishments in Paris. Formerly he advanced to students their monthly money, which he made them return threefold when the remittances arrived. Reading with difficulty, and unable to write, marking the number of sous which he lent with notches in the wood, as he had seen the baker-boys of Lyons, his compatriots, do, he never became confused in his accounts, and, above all, did not lend his money unwisely. Later, when he had become rich, and was at the head of the house where for fifteen years he had worn an apron, he perfected his business, placed it all on an unlimited credit, which at the end of the day left the three *café*-counters empty, but drew up interminable columns of charges for bottles of bock, dinners, and small glasses, on books fantastically kept, with the famous pens with fine tips, held in such esteem among business men in Paris. The good man's plan was simple : he allowed the student his pocket and board money, and gave him credit for meals and consumable articles, and, to a privileged few, credit for a chamber in the house.

During the whole course of study, he did not ask for a sou, and let the interest of a considerable sum accumulate ; but this was not done rashly and without watchfulness. Malmus passed two vacation months of the year in making journeys to the provinces, to assure himself of the health of the parents, and the standing of the families. His asthma made him out of breath while climbing the Cevenol peaks and tumbling down into the Languedoc valleys. Gouty and mysterious he was seen to wander along through remote villages, his big white eyebrows frowning, and his eyes looking mistrustful under their lids that were heavy as when he was a night-waiter. He remained two days, visited the notary and officer, and, by looking over the walls, inspected the small domain or the factory of the client, then was heard of no more.

What he learned at Aps gave him full confidence in Roumestan. The father, a former spinner, ruined by dreams of fortune and unfortunate inventions, lived modestly as an insurance inspector ; but his sister Mme. Portal, the childless widow of a wealthy magistrate, was to leave all her property to her nephew. So Malmus tried to keep him in Paris. "Come in to Sagnier's. I will help you." As the secretary of a man of importance he could not live in student's quarters, but furnished a small bachelor's apartment in Quai Voltaire, on the court, and took upon himself the rent and board. In this way the future leader began his career, with all the appearance of an easy life, yet in the background being terribly in need, and lacking ballast and pocket-money. Sagnier's friendship gained him valuable connections. The faubourg welcomed him. Only his worldly success, and invitations to Paris in summer, where he must go in

style, increased his expenses. Aunt Portal, at his repeated demands, aided him; but with precaution and parsimony, accompanying her package with long and amusing lectures, and biblical threats against this ruinous Paris. The situation was not tenable, and at the end of a year Numa sought something else; besides, Sagnier needed attentive students, hard-working fellows, and this one did not belong to that class. There was an unconquerable indolence in the Southerner, and, above all, a horror of an office and steady continuous work. This faculty, attention, which requires depth, was radically wanting in him. This was owing to the vivacity of his imagination, to the perpetual buoyancy of his ideas, and to that fickleness of mind visible even in his writing, which was never alike. He was superficial in voice and gestures like a tenor.

"When I do not speak, I do not think," he said very innocently; and it was true. Words did not spring forth through the force of thought: on the contrary, they brought it out, and awakened it by their mere mechanical sound. He astonished and amused himself at this meeting of words and ideas, lost in a corner of his memory, and found again, gathered together, and arranged in a heap of arguments, by speech. When speaking, he discovered in himself a sensibility of which he was not aware: he was moved at the vibration of his own voice, and at certain intonations which took hold of his heart, and filled his eyes with tears. They were certainly the qualities of an orator; but he was ignorant of them in himself, having had but little occasion at Sagnier's to make use of them. Nevertheless, this year with the great Legitimist lawyer was a decisive one in his life. He then acquired convictions, a calling, a taste for

politics, and a desire for fortune and glory. It was glory that came first. Some months after leaving his patron, this title, the secretary of Sagnier, — which he bore like actors who speak of themselves as “from the Comédie Française,” from having figured there twice, — gave him the power to forbid the publication of a small Legitimist paper, “Le Furet,” which had a wide circulation in the best society. He did so with great success. Having come there without preparation, and with his hands in his pockets, he talked two hours with insolent spirit and so much fine humor that he forced the judges to listen to him to the end. His accent and that terrible lisping, of which his laziness had always prevented him from ridding himself, gave an edge to his irony. There was power in the rhythm of that perfectly Southern eloquence : though theatrical and familiar, it had, above all, the clearness and broad light that is found even in the background of the limpid landscapes of the South.

Naturally, the paper was condemned, and the lawyer's great success was paid for by fines and imprisonment. Thus, in certain plays which fall to the ground, bringing author and manager to ruin, an actor will carve out for himself a reputation. The old Sagnier, who had come to hear him, embraced him before all the audience. “You may look upon yourself as a great man, my dear Numa,” he said, rather surprised at having hatched this *gerfalcon egg*. But the most astonished of all was Roumestan himself, who went from there as one awakens from a dream. His words echoed in his buzzing ears, while he giddily descended the wide palace staircase.

After the success of this ovation, after a shower of eulogistic letters, and the jaundiced smiles of his *confrères*, the lawyer thought himself launched, and patiently

waited for business in his office on the court, before the meagre widow's fire lighted by his *concierge*; but nothing came, save a few more invitations to dinner, and a pretty bronze from Barbedienne offered by the editors of the "Furet." The newly great man found before him the same difficulties, and uncertainty as to the future. Ah! these professions called liberal, which cannot decoy and call in clients, have hard struggles at first. It is a long while before a line of serious and paying clients seat themselves in the small waiting-room which is hired on credit, and has the usual uncomfortable furniture and a symbolical clock flanked by ungainly candelabra. Roumestan was reduced to giving instruction in law among Legitimists and Catholics; but the occupation seemed beneath his reputation, his success at the conference, and the praises with which people laurelled his name in the party journals. What saddened him still more, and made him feel his poverty, was the dinner which he was obliged to seek at Malmus', when he had no invitation out, or the state of his purse forbade his entering fashionable restaurants. The same lady at the counter sat between the same bowls of punch, the same porcelain stove roared near the pigeon-hole of pipes, and the shouts, accents, and black beards of the whole South mingled confusedly as before; but, his old associates having disappeared, he looked at those present with the prejudice which a man in his maturity and without position feels for those who are crowding him off the stage. How had he been able to live and find amusement in the trifles of these commonplace surroundings? But formerly students were not so stupid. Their admiration, even their capering about him like good-natured innocent dogs, because of his notoriety, were insufferable to him. While dining at

the *café*, the proprietor, who was very proud of his patron, would come and sit near him on the faded red sofa, which he shook with every attack of his asthma ; while at the adjoining table sat a tall, thin girl, the only face that remained of old times, — bony and indicating no particular age, and known in the district under the name of *l'ancienne à tous*, for whom some fine student, married, and returning to his native country, when leaving, had opened an account. Browsing so many years around the same picket, the poor creature knew nothing of the world outside, and was unaware of Roumestan's success, and spoke to him in a tone of commiseration as to one crippled in circumstances and of the same rank as herself. "Well, my old girl, how are you getting on? You know Pompon is married. . . . Laboulbène has exchanged, and passed as a substitute at Caen," Roumestan briefly answered, choking himself by mouthfuls twice too big ; and went off through the streets in the neighborhood, made noisy by breweries, and the selling of prunes, and felt the bitterness of an unsuccessful life which gave him a sense of downfall.

A few years passed thus, during which his name grew greater, and better established, always without other profit than low prices at Barbediennes. Once he was called upon to defend a merchant of Avignon, who had had some seditious silk handkerchiefs manufactured, with some device around the name of Count de Chambord, rather confused in the unskilful impression on the tissue, though underlined with an imprudent H. V., surrounded by an escutcheon. Roumestan played a fine bit of comedy, and became indignant that any one could see in it the least political allusion : H. V., — why, it was Horace Vernet, presiding over a commission of the Institute !

This *tarasconnade* had a local success that did more for his future than all the eulogies of Paris, and in particular gained the active sympathies of aunt Portal. This was expressed at first by a parcel of olive-oil and white melons ; then a quantity of other provisions followed, — figs, peppers, *canisjons* from Aix, and *boutarques*¹ from Martigues, jujubes, azeroles, carobs, and other insignificant fruit, about which the old lady raved, and which the lawyer left to decay in the bottom of a cupboard. Some time afterwards a letter arrived, which in its coarse goose-quill writing recalled the rough accent and ludicrous expressions of the aunt, and betrayed her ill-regulated mind by the absolute absence of punctuation, and the jumping from one idea to another.

Numa, however, thought he discovered that the good woman wished to marry him to the daughter of a councillor at the Court of Appeal in Paris, M. Le Quesnoy, whose wife — a young lady from Aps by the name of Soustelle — had been brought up with her at the Sisters of La Calade. She had a large fortune, — pretty figure, — was a little defiant, and had rather a *refrèjon* air, but marriage would change that. And if this marriage took place, what would aunt Portal give her Numa? One hundred thousand francs in good silver money on the wedding-day.

Beneath the provincialisms of the language, there was a serious proposition, — so serious, that, the second day after, Numa received an invitation to dine at Le Quesnoy. He went there somewhat excited. The councillor, whom he often met at the Palace, was one of the men who impressed him the most. Tall and slender, with a haughty face of unhealthy paleness, with a sharp search-

¹ Italian dish of fishes' eggs preserved in vinegar. — TRANS.

ing eye, and a mouth compressed as if it were sealed, the old magistrate, a native of Valenciennes, who himself seemed fortified and casemated by Vauban, engineer of Louis XIV., threw a restraint upon him by his Northern coldness. The high position which he owed to his fine works on the penal law, to his large fortune, and the austerity of his life, — which would have been more important still, had it not been for the independence of his opinions, and the hermit-like seclusion in which he had buried himself since the death of a son of twenty, — passed before the eyes of the Southerner, one evening in September, 1865, as he ascended the broad stone steps, with carved railing, of the Hotel Le Quesnoy, one of the most ancient in the Place Royale.

The grand salon into which he was introduced, the solemn look of the lofty ceilings which joined the doors by the delicate frieze, the straight hangings of gold and fawn-colored striped silk framing the windows which opened on an antique balcony, and an angle of reddish color formed by the brick buildings of the place, were not likely to dispel his impression. But the reception of Mme. Le Quesnoy soon put him at his ease. This little woman with a sad though kindly smile, and wrapped up and stiff with rheumatism, from which she had suffered since she lived in Paris, preserved the accent and habits of her dear South, and the love of all that reminded her of it. She made Roumestan sit near her, and said, while tenderly looking at him in the dim light, "He is quite the picture of Evelina." This pet name of aunt Portal, which Numa was not accustomed to hear, touched him like a memory of childhood. For a long time Mme. Le Quesnoy had wished to know the nephew of her friend ; but her house was very sad, and their mourning had kept

them apart from the gay world. Now they decided to receive occasionally ; not that their grief was less deep, but because of their elder daughter in particular, who was approaching her twentieth year. Turning to the balcony, along which rang peals of youthful laughter, she called, "Rosalie, Hortense, come : M. Roumestan is here."

Ten years later he recalled the calm, smiling face as it appeared in the frame of the tall window, and the tender light of the sunset, and the approach of the beautiful young girl while re-adjusting her hair which her little sister had disarranged in play, and her clear eyes, and straightforward look, without the slightest coquettish embarrassment. He felt himself at once drawn to her in confidence and sympathy.

Once or twice, however, during dinner, in the chance of conversation, Numa thought he caught in the expression of the beautiful profile with the pure complexion near him a haughty shudder that no doubt suited the *refrèjon* manner of which aunt Portal spoke, and which Rosalie had, owing to her resemblance to her father. But the little pout of the partly open mouth, and the cold look of the blue eye, was very quickly softened to a kindly attention, and a delighted surprise, which there was no attempt to conceal. Born and brought up in Paris, Mlle. Le Quesnoy always felt a decided aversion to the South, where the accent, manners, and landscape, of which she had glimpses in her vacation journeys, were alike repugnant to her. In this there was something like instinct of race, and a subject for gentle quarrels between the mother and daughter.

"I will never marry a man from the South," said Rosalie, laughing ; and she pictured to herself a type that was noisy, coarse, and vapid, and like the tenor in an opera,

or an agent of Bordeaux wines, with an expressive, regular face. Roumestan resembled somewhat the clear image of this little mocking Parisian lady ; but his ardent, musical words acquired this evening, in the sympathy around him, a strength and irresistible attractiveness which exalted and refined his face. After a few remarks made in a low tone between neighbors at table, — those side-dishes of conversation which pass round with the pickles and caviare, — the conversation became general. They spoke of the last *fêtes* at Compiègne, the travestied hunts, where the guests figured as lords and ladies of the court of Louis XV. Numa, who was acquainted with the liberal ideas of the old Le Quesnoy, launched forth into a glorious improvisation that was almost prophetic, and described the court in the form of a circle, with knights and grooms galloping beneath a sky of orange, and rushing forward at the death of the stag, in the midst of lightning, and distant claps of thunder ; then, how in the midst of the *fête* a deluge came, drowning the cries of “ Whoop, whoop ! ” and how the monarchical *mardi-gras* ended in a splashing of blood and mud. Perhaps the piece was not quite new, perhaps Roumestan had already tried it at the conference. But never anywhere had his tone of rebellious honesty awakened the enthusiasm that was suddenly visible in the clear, deep gaze which he felt turned upon him, while the sweet face of Mme. Le Quesnoy lighted up with a look of roguishness, and seemed to ask her daughter, “ Well, what do you think of this man of the South ? ”

Rosalie was captivated. In the thrill of her innermost being she felt the power of that voice, and those generous thoughts so in harmony with her youth, her love of liberty and justice. Like the women who at the theatre

always associate the singer with his cavatina, and the actor with his *rôle*, she forgot the part which it was necessary to allow the virtuoso. Oh ! if she had known what nothingness was behind the lawyer phrases, and how little the banquets at Compiègne affected him, and that it would have needed only an invitation with the imperial stamp to make him decide to join these cavalcades in which his vanity, and instincts of a player and comedian, could be satisfied at his ease ! But the charm was upon her. The table seemed to her to be enlarged, and the weary and sleepy faces of the few guests, a president of the Chamber, and a physician of the neighborhood, to be transformed. When they passed into the *salon*, the chandelier, lighted for the first time since her brother's death, dazzled her like the sun itself. Roumestan was the sun. He brought back life to the stately mansion, and drove away gloom and mourning, the darkness that gathered in every corner, and those atoms of sadness which float around old dwellings ; he brightened the faces of the tall mirrors, and gave color to the delicious wall-painting that had been faded for a hundred years.

“ Are you fond of painting, sir ? ”

“ O mademoiselle ! am I fond of it ? ”

The truth is, he understood nothing about it ; but on this subject, as on many others, he had a store of ideas and of ready phrases. While the tables were being arranged for play, painting was a good excuse for a familiar conversation with the young girl, as they examined the ancient decorations on the ceiling and some master canvases hung on the admirably preserved Louis XIII. woodwork. Of the two, Rosalie was the artist. Having grown up in an atmosphere of intelligence and taste, the

sight of a fine picture, or rare piece of carving, caused her strong and thrilling emotions, felt rather than expressed because of the great reserve of her nature and that pretended admiration of society which prevents the expression of the true. Seeing them together, however, and seeing the eloquent assurance with which the lawyer expatiated, with grand professional gestures assumed on account of Rosalie's thoughtful and attentive air, one would have said he was some famous master giving a lesson to his pupil.

"Mamma, can we go into your room? I would like to show the gentleman the hunting-panel."

At the whist-table there was a furtive glance of inquiry from the mother to the man whom with an inexpressible tone of renunciation and humility she called "M. Le Quesnoy:" at a slight sign from the councillor, which declared it proper, she in her turn acquiesced. They crossed a passage lined with books, and found themselves in the parents' room, which had the same stately, hundred-years-old aspect as the *salon*. The hunting-panel was over a small finely carved door.

"We cannot see any thing," said the young girl. She held up the candlestick which she took from a card-table, and with her hand held aloft displaying her fine figure, she lighted the panel representing Diana of the chase surrounded by her attendants, in an Elysian landscape. But with that Canéphore-like gesture which sent from her bright eyes a double flame above her simply dressed hair, her haughty smile, and lithe, floating, maidenly figure, she was more the Diana than was the goddess herself. Roumestan looked at her; and, captivated by her modest charms and true girl-like innocence, he forgot who she was, what he was doing there, and his

dreams of fortune and ambition. A mad desire came over him to hold that supple form in his arms, and kiss that fine hair whose delicate odor intoxicated him, to carry away this beautiful child to be the charm and happiness of his life ; and something told him that if he tried it she would consent, — that she was his, really his, captivated and conquered the first day. O fire and wind of the South, you are irresistible !

CHAPTER III.

THE WRONG SIDE OF A GREAT MAN (*continued*).

IF ever there were two beings not made to live together, these two were the ones. Opposites by instinct, education, temperament, and race, with wholly dissimilar opinions, they were the North and South brought together without a chance of possible fusion. Passion lives on these contrasts, and when they are pointed out it laughs at them, feeling itself the stronger; but in the daily course of life, in the monotonous sequence of days and nights under the same roof, the incense of the intoxication caused by love is dispelled, and they see and judge each other. In the beginning of their new housekeeping the awakening did not come at once,—at least to Rosalie. Clear-sighted and sensible about every thing else, she remained a long time blind as to Numa, without understanding to what degree she was superior to him. He was soon his natural self again. The ardors of the South are sudden for the very reason of their violence. Then, the Southerner is so convinced of the inferiority of woman, that when once married, being sure of his happiness, he establishes himself as a master, like a pacha, accepting love as a homage, and finding it very beautiful; for indeed love takes time, and Numa was very busy with the new course of life which marriage, his large fortune, and high position at the palace as the son-in-law of Le Quesnoy, obliged him to lead.

The hundred thousand francs of aunt Portal served to pay Malmus, the upholsterer, and to wipe out the dreary life of a bachelor; and the transition from the humble *frichti*, on the worn-out velvet bench, near "every one's old girl," to the dining-room in the Rue Scribe, where he presided, opposite his elegant Parisian wife, at the sumptuous dinners offered to those distinguished in law and song, seemed sweet to him. The provincial loved a brilliant life, with luxurious and epicurean pleasure; but he liked it best at his own house, near at hand, with the degree of freedom that permits a cigar and a strongly flavored story. Rosalie yielded, and accommodated herself to circumstances, to having the house open and the table ready every evening for ten or fifteen guests, who were always men, among whose black coats her light dress was a bright relief until the coffee was served and the boxes of Havanas were opened, when she left the place free for political discussions, and the unsteady laughter after the dessert of a bachelor's dinner. The mistress of a house alone knows what private complications and trouble with the servants are caused by this daily display. Rosalie struggled against it without a complaint, and tried her best to regulate the disorder brought about by the excitement of her terrible great man, who disturbed her with his restlessness, and, from time to time, smiled at his little wife between two thunder-claps. She regretted only that she did not have him enough to herself. Even at the early breakfast of a lawyer who was importuned by great numbers during office-hours, there was always one friend between them, a companion whom the man of the South could not do without, the eternal giver of the reply necessary to the flow of his ideas, the arm on which he complacently leaned,

and to which he confided his heavy lawyer's bag when he went to the palace.

Ah ! how gladly she would have accompanied him beyond the bridge, and how happy she would have been on rainy days to go and wait for him in their *coupé*, and to return with him closely shut up behind the closed windows dim with mist ! But she no longer dared to ask him, being sure that there would always be an excuse, a rendezvous in the large hall with one of the three hundred intimate friends of whom the Southerner said in a deeply moved tone, "He adores me, and would cast himself into the fire for me." This was his way of understanding friendship. Besides, he had no choice among his associates. His easy disposition and lively caprices led him to rashly welcome the first comer, and as speedily reject him. Every week there was a new fancy, a name spoken in every sentence, which Rosalie, at every meal, carefully inscribed on the small embellished card of the *menu*, and which then suddenly disappeared, as if the personality of the gentleman had been found as thin and as easily effaced as the colors of the little pasteboard.

Among these friends of the moment, one alone continued, less on account of friendship than on account of an intimacy from childhood ; for Roumestan and Bompard were born in the same street. The latter was one of the household ; and the young wife, as soon as her wedded life began, found installed in her home in the place of honor, like a piece of family furniture, this slender personage, with the head of a palikare, a large eagle's nose, and eyes like agate balls, in a honey-combed saffron complexion seamed like Cordova leather, with those wrinkles peculiar to old men on the stage, and

clowns, and to every face continually distorted. Yet Bompard had never been a comedian. For a time he sang in the choruses at Les Italiens, and it was there that Numa met him again. Excepting in this instance, it is impossible to positively affirm any thing concerning the changeable life of this man. He had seen every thing, tried every trade, and been everywhere. One could not speak before him of a celebrated man, or a famous event, without his declaring, "He is my friend;" or, "I was there. I have been there," immediately followed by a story to prove it. And putting these stories together, one made amazing combinations. Bompard, in the same year, commanded a company of Polish deserters and *tcherkesses* at the siege of Sebastopol, directed the chapel of the king of Holland, with the aid of the sister of the king, which gave him six months within the casemates at the fortress of La Haye, but which did not prevent him from following, at the same time, an idea from Laghouat to Godames, in the midst of the African Desert. All this was related with a strong Southern accent, bordering on the solemn, with very few gestures, but with a mechanical play of the face, like the evolutions of the broken glass in a kaleidoscope, which was tiresome to behold. Bompard's present was not less obscure and mysterious than his past. Where did he live, and on what? Sometimes he talked of a great business in asphaltum, of a portion of Paris to be covered with bitumen on an economical plan; then, suddenly, full of his discovery of an infallible remedy against phylloxera, he said he only awaited a letter from the minister to receive the premium of one hundred thousand francs, and to settle his bill at the little restaurant where he took his meals, and whose patrons he had driven almost insane with his wild mirage of extravagant hopes.

This delirious Southerner was the delight of Roumestan. He always took him about with him, used him for a laughing-stock, urging him on, warming him up, and inciting him to folly. When Numa stopped to talk to any one on the boulevard, Bompard, with a dignified step, moved aside with a gesture as if he were to re-light his cigar. He was usually seen at funerals, and at opening nights, asking in a busy manner, "Have you seen Roumestan?" He came to be as well known as the latter. At Paris this type of follower is quite common; and all the well-known people drag around after them a Bompard, who walks in their shadow, and outlines a kind of personality. By chance, Roumestan's Bompard really had one of his own. But Rosalie could not endure this supernumerary in her happiness, who was always between herself and her husband, filling the rare moments when they might have been alone. The two friends spoke between them a *patois* which put her aside, and laughed at untranslatable local jokes. What she reproached him for, above all, was the necessity of lying, and the inventions in which she believed at first, so foreign was imposture to her frank, upright nature, whose greatest charm was the harmony between her speech and thought, apparent in the sonorousness and firmness of her crystal voice.

"I do not like him: he is a liar," she said, in a deeply indignant tone, which greatly amused Roumestan, who, in defence of his friend, said, "No, he is not a liar: he is a man of imagination, a waking sleeper, who tells his dreams aloud. My country is full of such people. It is the sun, the accent. Look at aunt Portal, and at me: if I did not watch over myself every moment"—

A little hand protestingly closed his mouth. "Hush,

hush ! I should love you no longer if, in that respect, you belonged to the South."

He did belong to it, however ; and, notwithstanding the Parisian style and society polish which constrained him, she could see this terrible South, coarse, illogical, and given to set ways, reveal itself. The first time, it was shown in religion. On that subject, as on all others, Roumestan held to the tradition of his province. He was the Provençal Catholic who does not practise, and goes to church only to meet his wife at the end of mass, remains in the back part of the confessional box with the dignified air of a papa at a spectacle of Chinese ghosts, confesses only in time of cholera ; but would be hung, or become a martyr, for that faith whose force he did not feel, and which in no way either regulated his passions or his vices.

When he married he knew that his wife was of the same faith as himself, and that the curate of St. Paul bestowed blessings and praise upon them in harmony with the tapers, the carpets, and the display of flowers, of a first-class wedding. He asked nothing in detail. All the women he knew — his mother, cousins, aunt Portal, and the Duchess of San-Donnino — were fervent Catholics. Therefore he was very much surprised, after a few months of marriage, to see that Rosalie was not devout ; and he remarked to her, —

"Do you never go to confession?"

"No, my dear," she said quietly ; "nor do you, that I see."

"It is not of much consequence about me."

"Why?" she asked, looking at him, her eyes shining with astonishment, so little did she seem to suspect her inferiority as a woman. He found no answer, and let

her explain it herself. But she was not a free-thinker or a strong-minded woman. She was educated at an excellent boarding-school at Paris, with a priest from St. Laurent for chaplain ; and when she left school, in her seventeenth year, she continued her religious devotion at home a few months longer, by the side of her mother, a devout woman from the South, until one day some inward change suddenly took place, and she confessed to her parents the restraint and uncontrollable repugnance which the confessional caused her. The mother might have tried to conquer what she believed to be a caprice, but M. Le Quesnoy interposed. "Leave her alone, leave her alone," he said. "The same feeling came over me at her age." From that time she was guided only by her own conscience. Being a woman of the world and a Parisian besides, she had a horror of independence in a wife, which she thought bad taste ; therefore, if Numa persisted in going to church, she would accompany him as she had so long accompanied her mother, without, however, consenting to a falsehood or to the pretence of beliefs she no longer held. He listened to her full of amazement, frightened at hearing such ideas expressed by her with an energy and maintenance of her moral rights that upset all his ideas about feminine dependence.

"Then you do not believe in God?" he asked, in his grandest lawyer-like tone, with his finger solemnly raised to the mouldings on the ceiling.

"Do you think that possible?" she cried, so frankly and sincerely that it was like a treaty of faith. Then he fell back on the world, the social proprieties, and the fixedness of the religious and monarchical idea. All the ladies were devout, — for instance, the duchess, and Mme.

d'Esparbès, — and received their confessor at table in the evening. This would have a deplorable effect if it were known. He stopped, feeling that he was wasting words, and the discussion ended. Two or three Sundays in succession, he made a great show of conducting his wife to mass, which to Rosalie was the blessed privilege of a walk on her husband's arm. But he quickly wearied of the *régime*, pretended business, and ceased all Catholic manifestation.

This first misunderstanding in no way disturbed the household. As if she wished for pardon, the young wife redoubled her kind attentions and wise but always smiling submission. Perhaps, being less blind than at first, she vaguely foresaw things that she dared not even confess to herself; but she was happy in spite of all, because she wished to be so, and because she lived in the glamour with which the new life, and the revelation of their destiny as wives, surrounds young brides, who are still wrapped up in those dreams and uncertainties that are like the shreds of the white tulle of their wedding-dresses. The awakening could not be long in coming. To her it was sudden and frightful.

One summer day, — they were passing the warm season at Orsay, on the Le Quesnoy estate, — Rosalie, after her father and husband had left for Paris, as they did every morning, found that she needed a small pattern for the *layette* on which she was working. A *layette*! Heavens! Yes. Very rich ones are sold all made; but true mothers, those who are born to be such, love to do their own sewing and cutting, and to feel, as the basket fills in which are piled up the child's pretty articles, that they are hastening its coming, and that each finished article brings them nearer to the hoped-for birth. Not for any

thing in the world would Rosalie have deprived herself of this joy, or have permitted another to touch a hand to the great amount of sewing that had been going on for five months, ever since she was sure of her happiness. And yonder on the bench at Orsay, where she worked in the shade of a large catalpa, there was a display of little caps, just large enough for the fist, and little flannel dresses and bodices which with their tight sleeves represented the life and stiff gestures of early infancy. And just this one pattern was wanting.

"Send your maid," said the mother. "The maid, indeed ! Would she know any thing about it ? No, no : I shall go myself. I will do my shopping before noon. Then I will go and surprise Numa, and eat half of his breakfast."

The idea of this bachelor's repast with her husband in the partly closed apartments of the Rue Scribe, with the curtains taken down, and the covering on the furniture, amused her like an escapade. She laughed at it to herself, when, her errands being done, she ascended the carpetless stairs of her Parisian house arranged for summer, and said to herself, cautiously putting the key in the lock to surprise him, "I have come a little late : he must have breakfasted."

In the dining-room there remained only the *débris* of a small epicurean feast for two, and the *valet-de-chambre* in a checked jacket standing before the table, about to empty the bottles and dishes. She thought of nothing at first but her plan thwarted by her own fault. Ah ! if she had not loitered so long in that store, before the pretty trifles in embroidery and lace !

"Has monsieur gone out ?"

The delay of the servant in answering, the sudden

paleness of his broad, impudent-looking face, spread out between long whiskers, did not yet attract her attention. She attributed this to the feelings of a servant caught in the act of stealing to satisfy his gluttony. He must say, however, that monsieur was still there, and busy, and that he would be so for a long while. But how long he was in stammering it out ! with what trembling hands he cleared the table, and set a plate for his mistress !

“Did he breakfast alone?”

“Yes, madame ; that is to say, with M. Bompard.”

She looked at a black lace veil thrown on a chair. The queerly acting man saw it also ; and, when their eyes met on the same object, it was like a revelation to her. Suddenly, without a word, she sprang forward, crossed the little waiting *salon*, and went straight to the study door, opened it wide, and fell lifeless. They had not even locked themselves in.

You should have seen the woman. She was a worn-out blonde, whose forty years were betrayed by a mottled face, with thin lips, and eyelids wrinkled like the skin of an old glove ; under her eyes, in violet seams, were the marks of a life of pleasure ; her shoulders were square, and her voice was harsh. But she belonged to the nobility, and was the Marchioness d'Esparbès ; and to the man of the South that stood for every thing, the escutcheon concealing the woman. Separated from her husband by a scandalous law-suit, in trouble with her family and the great houses of the faubourg, Mme. d'Esparbès rallied for the empire, opened a political and diplomatic *salon*, which was lightly polished, and where the most noted personages of that time came without their wives ; then, after two years of intrigue, when she had created a party, and secured influence. she thought

of making an appeal. Roumestan, who had pleaded for her in the first instance, could hardly refuse to follow her. He hesitated, however, on account of very well-known opinions. But the marchioness attacked him in such a manner, and the vanity of the lawyer was so flattered by it, that all his resistance gave way. And now, the time of appeal being near, they saw each other every day, sometimes at his house, and sometimes at hers, and were carrying on the business vigorously, by double entry.

Rosalie came near dying on account of this horrible discovery, which suddenly attacked her when in the sensitive, painful state of a woman about to become a mother, and bearing within her two hearts to suffer.

The child died, and the mother survived. When, after three days of prostration, she regained her memory, which brought back her anguish, she was overcome with a weeping-fit, — a bitter flood of tears that nothing could check. Without a cry or complaint, when she ceased to weep at the treachery of the friend and husband, her tears increased at the sight of the empty cradle, where rested, alone, the treasures of the *layette* under curtains of transparent blue. Poor Numa was in almost as great despair. This great hope of a little Roumestan, the “elder son” in provincial families being always the most distinguished, destroyed by his own fault, the pale face of his wife marked with an expression of renunciation, the chagrin repressed between clinched teeth and smothered sobs, rent his heart. They were very unlike his own manifestations, and the coarse sensibility which he showed on the surface, as he sat at the foot of the bed of his victim, his eyes swollen with tears, and his lips trembling, “Rosalie, come now, come,” spoken with the Southern accent, which so read-

ily took a pitying tone. Beneath it one could understand: "Do not grieve, my poor beast. Is it worth the trouble? Does it prevent me from loving you?"

And it was true that he loved her as much as his light nature would permit of a lasting attachment. He could not think of any one but herself keeping his house, and caring for and nursing him. He said, very artlessly, "I need devotion near me," and took good care that it should be the most complete and amiable that he could desire; and the idea of losing it frightened him. Was not that love?

Alas! Rosalie imagined something quite different. Her life was destroyed, her idol fallen, and her confidence forever lost. And yet she pardoned through pity, like a mother who yields to the child that cries, and humiliated herself for the dignity of their name, for the sake of her father, whose name would also have been sullied by the scandal of a separation, and because her family believed she was happy, and she could not destroy their illusion. For example, this pardon so generously granted, she warned him he could not depend upon if he renewed the outrage, — never again, or their two lives would become cruelly and forever separated before every one. This was indicated with a tone and look in which a woman's pride took its revenge against social proprieties and trammels. Numa understood, and swore sincerely never to do wrong again. He shuddered also at having risked his happiness, and the repose which he so greatly valued, for a pleasure that gratified only his vanity. The relief of being rid of his great lady, the marchioness with the stout frame, who, apart from her escutcheon, pleased him little more than "*l'ancienne-à-tous*" of the Café Malmus, and of no longer having

letters to write, or rendezvous to appoint, and the knowledge that he had reached the end of all that hollow, sentimental flummery which so little suited his ease-loving nature, made him feel almost as radiant as did the clemency of his wife, when his domestic peace was restored.

Fortunately, every thing went on as before. Nothing in the appearance of their life had changed. The table was always laid ; and there was the same course of *fêtes* and receptions, at which Roumestan sang, declaimed, and strutted about, without suspecting that near him two large eyes, wide open, and seeing clearer from the tears she had shed, were watching. She understood, now, that her great man was full of gestures and phrases, kind and generous by moods, full of caprice, ostentation, and having a coquettish desire to please. She felt the want of depth of his nature, which was unreliable in its convictions as in its hatred ; underneath all, she was frightened for herself and for him, at the weakness concealed under high-sounding words and a loud voice, — a weakness that made her indignant, but at the same time attached her to him on account of his need of maternal protection, through which a wife maintains her devotion when love has gone. Always ready to yield, to devote herself in spite of treachery, she had only one secret fear, — that he might become discouraged.

Being clear-sighted, Rosalie quickly perceived the change that had taken place in her husband's opinions. His relations with the faubourg became cooler. The nankeen waistcoat of the old Sagnier, and the *fleur-de-lis* on his cravat-pin, no longer inspired him with the same veneration. He found this great mind failing. It was his drowsy ghost that ruled at the Chamber, and

somewhat reminded one of the Legitimacy and its torpors, akin to death. Thus Numa changed to the other side quite slowly, and partly opened his door to the Imperialist notabilities whom he met in the *salon* of Mme. d'Esparbès, whose influence had prepared this veering about. "Take care of your great man. I think he is moulting," said the counsellor to his daughter one day, when the jesting spirit of the lawyer found amusement at table at the course of Froshdorf, whom he compared to Don Quixote's wooden Pegasus, motionless, and riveted to the spot, while his knight, with bandaged eyes, fancied he was taking a long voyage in mid-air.

She did not have to question him long. Concealing as well as he could his falsehoods, — which he disdained to support by complications or finesse, — he preserved an *abandon* and ingenuity which freed him all at once. Entering his study one morning, she surprised him very much absorbed in the composition of a letter; and, leaning her head down to his, she said, "To whom are you writing?" He stammered, tried to find something to say, and, feeling moved by this persistent look as by his conscience, he had an impulse of forced frankness. It was written in a brief, emphatic style, such as is seen in the courts accompanied by gesticulations and the movement of flowing sleeves. It was a letter to the Emperor in which he accepted the post of councillor of state. It began thus: —

"A Vendean from the South, educated in the monarchical faith, and in the reverent worship of the past, I do not intend to forfeit honor or conscience" —

"You will not send that," she said quickly.

He began by growing excited, rude, and talking loudly,

like a true *bourgeois* from Aps discussing with his family. Why was she meddling at this late day? What did she mean by it? Did he torment her about the shape of her hats, or the cut of her new dresses? he thundered out as to an audience, at the silent, almost scornful calmness of Rosalie, who let all this violence, which was all that was left of a will previously destroyed, and now at her mercy, pass unnoticed. A crisis like this which weakens and disarms is like a defeat to excitable persons.

"You must not send that letter," she resumed: "it would belie your life and promises."

"Promises? To whom?"

"To me. Do you remember how we became acquainted, and how you gained my heart with your rebellion, and your strong indignation against the imperial masquerade? And I cared even less for your opinions than for a fixed and upright line of conduct and a manly will that I admired in you."

He defended himself. Must he, then, be chilled forever in a cold, lifeless party, an abandoned camp buried in snow?

He did not go to the Empire, but the Empire came to him. The Emperor was an excellent man, full of ideas, and far superior to those who surrounded him. Every excuse was given for his defection; but Rosalie would not accept any of them, and showed him his want of wisdom in breaking his word. "You do not understand how anxious all those men are, and how they feel the ground undermined and hollow beneath them. The least shock, a detached stone, and to what a depth every thing crumbles!"

She particularized, went into details, and summed up the after-dinner speeches which a silent woman collects

and meditates upon when the men sitting apart in groups leave their wives, intelligent or otherwise, to languish in commonplace conversations, which the subjects of toilets and worldly slander do not always suffice to make lively. Roumestan was astonished. Droll little woman ! Where had she picked up what she was now saying ? He did not know that she was so wise ; and, in one of those sudden changes which make these extreme characters attractive, he took in both hands her reasoning little face, so charming, however, in its youthful brilliancy, and, covering it with a shower of tender kisses, said, " You are right, a hundred times right. Just the reverse must be written." He was going to tear up his rough draught ; but there was an opening phrase that pleased him, and might serve if modified a little, as follows : —

" A Vendean of the South, educated in the monarchical faith, and in the respectful worship of the past, I should believe I were failing in honor and conscience were I to accept the post that your Majesty " —

This refusal, very polite but very firm, published by the Legitimist newspapers, would bring Roumestan a new situation, and make his name the synonyme of incorruptible fidelity. " Not to be rent," said the " Charivari," in an amusing caricature showing the toga of the great lawyer violently disputed for, and torn between all the parties. Some time after, the Empire fell ; and, when the Assembly of Bordeaux re-united, Numa Roumestan had to choose between three departments of the South that had elected him deputy solely because of his letter. His first speeches, delivered with rather breathless eloquence, would soon have made him chief of every party of the Right. It was not the small change of old Sagnier they had there. In this time of mixed races, pure blood is

rare ; and the new leader triumphed in the benches of the Chamber as easily as formerly on the lounges of father Malmus. Counsellor-general of his department, the idol of the whole South, elevated still more by the magnificent situation of his late father-in-law, the first president in the Court of Appeal after the fall of the Empire, Numa was evidently destined some day to become a minister. Meanwhile, a great man to every one excepting his wife, he displayed his new glory between Paris, Versailles, and Provence, the while amiable and familiar, and a jolly companion who carried his glory with him on his journey, but willingly left it in a box like an opera-hat.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AUNT FROM THE SOUTH. — MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD.

MAISON PORTAL, where the great man from Aps resides during his stay in Provence, counts among the curiosities of the place. It figures in the Joanne guide with the Temple of Juno, the amphitheatres, the old theatre, and the tower of the Antonines, former vestiges of Roman rule, of which the city is very proud, and which it keeps in good order. But it is not the heavy arched rear gateway of the old provincial dwelling, dented with very large nail-heads which strengthen it, nor the tall windows bristling with a thicket of railings, nor the pompous iron spikes, which one shows to strangers, but a narrow corbel balcony with an iron railing on the first story above the porch. From it Roumestan speaks, and shows himself to the crowd when he arrives ; and the whole town could bear witness that the heavy fist of the orator was sufficient to give those capricious curves and peculiar bulges to the balcony that formerly was as straight as a rule. “ *Tè, ve !* Our Numa has kneaded iron,” they tell you, with their eyes standing out from their heads, and with a rolling of the *r*—*petrrri le ferrr*—which does not permit the shadow of a doubt. The race of the land of Aps is proud and good-natured, and possesses a liveliness of impression, and an intemperance of language, of which aunt Portal, a true type of the local *bourgeoisie*, gives a complete idea. She is very stout and apoplectic, the blood having set-

tled in the drooping cheeks which are the color of wine-dregs in contrast with the skin of an ancient blonde, to judge by the very white neck and forehead, where beautiful, carefully-curled coils of dead-silver hair project from a cap of mauve ribbon. She wears a corsage buttoned crosswise; yet she is imposing, and has a majestic air and agreeable smile. Such is Mme. Portal at first sight in the dim light of her *salon*, that is always tightly closed, according to the Southern fashion. She might be called a family portrait of an old marchioness of Mirabeau, and is in keeping with that ancient dwelling built a hundred years ago by Gonzague Portal, the master councillor in the parliament of Aix. One still finds in Provence houses of this kind, and people of former times, as if through these high-panelled doors the last century had passed, and left in the opening a part of its furbelowed dress. But in talking with the aunt, if you are so unfortunate as to pretend that the Protestants are equal to the Catholics, or that Henry V. is not just about ascending the throne, the old portrait starts violently from its frame, and, with the veins of her neck swollen, and with nervous hands deranging by the handful the beautiful order of her smooth coils of hair, falls into a frightful anger, interspersed with oaths, threats, and curses, and into one of those angry fits that are famous in the town, and the odd freaks of which are quoted. At a *soirée* at her house, when the servant upsets a salver laden with glasses, aunt Portal screams, becomes gradually excited, and from reproaches and lamentations reaches a violent delirium in which indignation fails to find words to express itself. Then, strangling with what was left to say, and unable to strike the awkward servant, who prudently flies, she draws her silk skirt over her head,

hides behind it, and smothers in it her grumbling and angry grimaces, indifferent to showing her guests the white starched under-attire of a stout lady.

In any other place in the world she would have been treated as a crazy woman ; but at Aps, the country of explosive hot-heads, Mme. Portal is merely thought harsh in speech. It is true that when crossing Cavalerie Place in peaceful afternoons, when the song of the locusts and a few chords of the piano alone enliven the cloister-like silence of the town, one hears strange exclamations from the lady, betrayed by the arches of the ancient dwelling, while she is shaking and stirring up her people : " Monster ! assassin ! bandit ! robber of priests' clothing ! I will cut your arm off ! I will skin you ! " And doors slam, banisters tremble under the high, sonorous, whitewashed vaults ; and windows noisily open, as if to permit the tatters torn from the unhappy servants to pass out, who none the less continue their duties, being accustomed to these storms, and knowing well that it is only her way of talking. In short, she is an excellent woman, passionate and generous, with that desire of pleasing, of devoting herself, and walking her feet off for others, which is one of the traits of the race ; the good results of which Numa, more than any one, had experienced. Since his nomination as a deputy, the house in the Cavalerie Place was presented to him, his aunt simply reserving the right to live in it until her death. And what a *fête* for her was the arrival of her Parisians, the excitement of music, serenades, receptions, and visits with which the presence of the great man enlivened her solitary life, that needed this wild gayety ! Then she adored her niece Rosalie, from the very contrast of their natures, and from the respect and awe which she felt for

the daughter of the president Le Quesnoy, the first magistrate in France.

And truly the young woman needed to have peculiar indulgence, and that love of kin which she inherited from her relations, to endure for two long months the wearisome surprises of the disordered imagination that was always as unduly excited, and easily moved, as her stout body was indolent. Seated in the cool vestibule as in a Moorish court, where a close, musty odor had settled, Rosalie, with embroidery in her fingers, like a Parisian lady who does not know how to remain idle, listened for hours to the surprising confidences of the stout lady, who was buried in an arm-chair opposite her, with her arms dancing, and hands empty, the better to gesticulate, and dealing out in a manner to take away one's breath the chronicles of the whole city, and her experiences with her maids and coachmen, whom she represented to be perfection or monsters, according to occasion or to her caprice. She became excited for or against some one, and, for lack of cause, made from the accumulated animosity of the day the most frightful and romantic accusations, and dark and venomous inventions with which her head, like the "*Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*," was filled. But Rosalie, by living near her Numa, had become accustomed to this exaggeration, and frenzy of words. She listened to it dreamily, without asking herself why she, who was so reserved and discreet, had entered into such a family of comedians so profuse in phrases, and so overflowing with gestures; and the story had to be very severe to make her check her with an "*O aunt!*" absently thrown in.

"Indeed, you are right, little one. Perhaps I exaggerate somewhat."

But the riotous imagination of the aunt quickly began to run on as foolish a track as ever, with an expressive tragic or burlesque mimicry, which plastered by turn on her broad face the two masks of the ancient theatre. She calmed herself only to relate her one journey to Paris, and the wonders of the passage of the "Somon," where she had stopped at a small hotel, patronized by all the traders of the country, and had taken the air only behind the stifling glass windows, where it was as hot as a melon-bed. In all the lady's narratives about Paris, this passage seemed to be her starting-point, — the elegant place of society *par excellence*.

These tedious and empty conversations were spiced with the oddest and most amusing French, in which set forms of speech, and dried flowers of ancient rhetoric, were mingled with foreign provincialisms; Mme. Portal detesting the language of the country, that admirable *patois* of color and sonorousness which vibrates like a Latin echo over the blue sea, and which only the people, and the peasants of that region, speak. She belongs to that Provençal *bourgeoisie*, which translates "Pecaïré" by "Péchère," and imagines it is the most correct pronunciation. When the coachman Ménicle (Dominique) came to say in the frankest manner, "Voù baia de civado au chivaou."¹ "That is right," she said: "now I understand;" and the man went away, convinced that he had spoken French. It is true, that, after leaving Valence, the people of the South know only this kind of French. Besides, aunt Portal picked up all her words, not to please her fancy, but according to the customs of a local grammar; pronounced *diligence*, *déligence*, and said *achéter*, *anédote*, *un régître*. A pillow-case she called

¹ "I am going to give the horse some oats."

a *coussinière*; an *ombrelle*, an *ombrette*; and the foot-warmer, which she kept under her feet in every season, a *banquette*. She did not weep, she *tombait des larmes*; and, although very *enlourdie*, she spent *pas plus de demi-heure* in taking a turn around the city. All her talk was ornamented with those small apostrophes, without particular signification, with which the provincials sprinkle their speech, and with those chips which they scatter between phrases to weaken, exalt, or sustain the multiplied accents: "*aie, ouie, avai, açavai, au moins, pas moins, différemment.*"

This scorn of the lady of the South for the idiom of her province extends to customs, local traditions, and even costumes. As aunt Portal did not wish that her coachman should speak Provençal, she would not have permitted a servant at her house with the Arlesian fichu and ribbons. "My house is not a *mas*, nor a mill," she said; and she does not permit them to "wear a hat." The hat at Aps is the distinctive and hierarchical sign of a *bourgeoise* ascendancy, and alone gives the title of "madame" that is refused to persons of the commune. You should see with what a superior air the wife of a retired captain, or the clerk of a mayoralty on eight hundred francs a year, who does her marketing herself, speaks of the height of a huge cap of some very rich farmer-woman from Crau; her own face being squeezed into a linen cap, ornamented with real antique lace. In the Portal mansion, the ladies have worn a hat for more than a century. That rendered the aunt very disdainful to poor people, and caused for Roumestan a terrible scene a few days after the *fête* at the amphitheatre.

It happened Friday morning, during a late breakfast, fresh and gay to outward appearance, but rigorously

meagre, — for aunt Portal was imperious in her command, — alternately placing upon the table big green peppers, unripe figs, almonds, and open watermelons resembling large pink magnolias, tarts with anchovy, and those little loaves of white pastry that are found nowhere else, all light dishes placed among the vases of fresh water, and the sparkling sweet wine ; while outside the air glimmered with grasshoppers and sunbeams, and a pale streak of light glided through a partly open window in the large dining-room, arched and sonorous as the refectory of a convent. In the middle of the table, two fine cutlets were smoking on a chafing-dish for Numa. Although his name was blessed in congregations, and mingled with every prayer, or perhaps for that very reason, the great man of Aps had a dispensation from his Highness, and was the only one to eat meat in his family. He serenely cut the bleeding flesh with his own hands, without disturbing himself about his wife and sister-in-law, who refreshed themselves, like aunt Portal, with figs and watermelons. Rosalie was accustomed to it : this meagre religious duty of two days a week, like the sun and dust, the mistral, mosquitoes, the stories of the aunt, and the Sunday services at St. Perpetua, made part of her yearly burden. But Hortense began to rebel with all the strength of her young stomach ; and it needed the authority of the tall sister to close her mouth during these sallies of the spoiled child, which upset Mme. Portal's ideas in regard to the education and good deportment of young ladies. The young girl contented herself with eating these trifles, comically rolling her eyes, and wildly sniffing Roumestan's cutlet, and murmuring quite low, for Rosalie alone, —

“ How faint it makes me ! I have been riding horse-

back this morning ; and, after being on the road, I am as hungry as I can be."

She still kept on her riding-dress, which fitted her tall, supple figure well, as did the little boy's collar her rebellious, irregular face, which was full of animation from her ride in the open air. And, her morning exercise having put her in the mood, she said, —

"*A propos*, Numa, what has become of Valmajour? When shall we see him?"

"Who is Valmajour?" said Roumestan, whose flighty brain had already forgotten the tambourine-player. "Yes, Valmajour. I did not remember him. I promised to see his relations before my departure. What an artist he is!"

He became excited, and saw again the arches of the arenas which whirled and danced in his head to the dull sound of the tambourine which haunted his memory, and buzzed within him.

And with sudden decision he exclaimed, —

"Aunt Portal, lend us the *berline*. We will go after breakfast."

The aunt's eyebrows frowned over two big eyes, glaring as those of a Japanese idol.

"The *berline*! *Avai*. Why do you wish to have it? Surely you are not going to take your ladies to the player of the *tutu-panpan*?"

This *tutu-panpan* so well expressed the double instrument, fife and tambourine, that Roumestan began to laugh. But Hortense took up the defence of the old provincial tambourinist with much vivacity. He impressed her more than any thing she had seen in the South. Besides, it would not be honest to break one's word to this worthy fellow. "A great artist, Numa: you said so yourself."

"Yes, yes, you are right, little sister. We must go."

Aunt Portal, who was choking, could not understand that a man like her nephew, a deputy, should trouble himself about peasants, managers, and people who from father to son played the flute in village *fêtes*. Absorbed in her idea, she pouted her lips disdainfully, and mimicked the movements of the musician, with the fingers of one hand spread out on an imaginary flute, and tapping the table with those of the other. Pretty people to show to young ladies! No, there was only one Numa. To the Valmajours, holy mother of the angels! And, becoming excited, she began to charge them with every crime, and to make them a family of monsters, historical and bloody as the Trestaillon family, when she perceived on the other side of the table Ménicle, who was from the country of the Valmajours, listening, with every feature expanded with astonishment. Immediately, in a terrible voice, she ordered him to quickly change his dress, and to have the *berline* ready at two o'clock *manque un quart*. All the aunt's anger ended in the same manner.

Hortense threw down her napkin, and ran to kiss the stout woman on both cheeks. She laughed and jumped with joy. "Let us hasten, Rosalie."

Aunt Portal looked at her niece.

"Ah, ça! Rosalie, I hope you will not run round the streets with those children."

"No, aunt, I shall remain with you," answered the young woman, smiling as if she were an old relative, her unwearying kindness and resignation having given her that position in the house.

At the appointed hour, Ménicle was ready; but they let him go on ahead to meet them on the Place des Arènes, and Roumestan left on foot with his sister-in-law,

who was eager and proud to see Aps and the house where he was born, on the arm of the great man, and to go again with him through the streets to find traces of his childhood and youth.

It was the hour for a siesta. The city was sleeping deserted and silent, and lulled into drowsiness by the mistral, which blew in great fan-like whiffs, airing and revivifying the summer heat of Provence, but rendering walking difficult, especially along the *cours* where nothing impeded its progress, and where, bellowing like a loose bull, it could run round the whole city. Claspings her companion's arm with both hands, Hortense walked along with bowed head, dazzled and suffocated, and happy at feeling herself borne along and stirred by the squalls, that came on like waves in plaintive cries and splashes of foam. Sometimes it was necessary to stop and cling to the ropes strung from one place to another against the ramparts on very windy days. On account of these squalls, where bits of bark and seeds of the plane-tree flew about, and on account of appearing larger by its solitude, the *cours* looked dismal, being still dirty with the melon-rinds, litters, and empty baskets, the *débris* of the recent market, as if in the South the mistral alone had charge of street-sweeping. Roumestan was in haste to meet the carriage; but Hortense, who was eager for a walk, and breathless and embarrassed by the squall, which intertwined her blue gauze veil three times around her hat and made her short travelling-suit cling to her and impede her walk, said, —

“How different people's natures are! Rosalie detests the wind. She says it scatters her ideas, and prevents her from thinking; but it exalts and intoxicates me.”

“So it does me,” cried Numa, his eyes full of moist-

ure, and grasping his hat that was flying off. At a turn he suddenly said, —

“This is my street: it was here that I was born.”

The wind was dying away, or rather was making itself less felt but still blowing afar off, as one hears, when the water is calm, the breaking of the sea against the shoals far away in the port. In a tolerably broad street, paved with sharp pebbles, and without a sidewalk, there stood a little obscure gray house between an Ursuline convent shaded by tall plane-trees, and an ancient hotel of manorial appearance bearing age-incrusted arms and this inscription, “Hotel de Rochemaure.” Opposite was a very old characterless building, encircled by defaced columns, trunks of statues, and tumular stones graven with Roman ciphers, and bearing the title “Academy” in tarnished green letters above a green doorway. It was there that the illustrious orator saw daylight on the 15th of July, 1832; and one might have made something of a comparison between his narrow classical talent, his Catholic and Legitimist traditions, and this small shabby *bourgeois* house, flanked by a convent, a manorial hotel, and looking upon a country academy. Roumestan felt moved, as always when his life brought before him his personality. For many years, thirty perhaps, he had not been there. It needed the fancy of this little girl. He was struck by the unchanged appearance of every thing. He recognized on the walls the trace of a shutter-fastening, which, when a child, he turned round with his hand every evening as he passed. Then the shafts of columns, the precious fragments of the academy, threw in the same places their classical shadows; the rose-laurels of the hotel had the same bitter odor; and he showed to Hortense the narrow window from which mamma Roumestan used to

motion to him when he returned from the School of the Brothers, "Come up quickly, father has come home." The father did not like to be kept waiting.

"What, Numa, is it really so? you were educated with the Brothers?"

"Yes, little sister, until I was twelve years old. At twelve aunt Portal placed me in the Assomption, a boarding-school that was regarded as the most *chic* of any in the town; but they were ignorant fellows who taught me to read in that great barrack with yellow blinds."

He remembered with a shudder the pail full of brine under the teacher's desk, in which ferules were moistened to render the leather lash more pliable and stinging; the large paved class-room, where on his knees lessons were recited, and where as their mildest punishment the scholars were forced to drag themselves along, extending and withdrawing their hand, until they reached the straight and stiff brother in his wrinkled black gown, which was rolled up on his arms in the effort of striking the blow: *Boute-à-cuire* he was called, because he also busied himself in the kitchen. He remembered how the blow, dealt with a grunt by the dear brother, made his little inky fingers tingle with pain. As Hortense became indignant at the brutality of these punishments, Roumestan related others more cruel; for instance, it was necessary to sweep with lappings of the tongue the freshly watered floor, its dust having become mud, and rasping the tender palate of the guilty boys.

"It is frightful. And you defend those people? You speak in their behalf at the Chamber!"

"Ah, my child! that is politics," said Roumestan, without becoming excited. While talking they were following a labyrinth of dark lanes of Oriental aspect, where old

women were sleeping on the stone steps before their door ; and other streets less gloomy, across which broad strips of printed calico with the signs "Haberdashery," "Drapery," and "Boots and Shoes," rustled and swayed in the wind. They thus reached what in Aps is called the "*placette*," a square of asphaltum melting in the sun, and surrounded by stores closed and silent at that hour, by the side of which, in the short shadows of the walls, bootblacks were snoring, with their heads bowed over their blacking-boxes, and their limbs stretched out as if they were drowned persons, — waifs of the tempest that had shaken the town. An unfinished building adorned the middle of the "*placette*." Hortense wishing to know what that white and unoccupied block of marble was waiting for, Roumestan, with a rather embarrassed smile, answered, as he hastened his steps, "For a complete history." The municipality of Aps had voted for a statue of himself ; but, the Liberals of the *avant-garde* having greatly disapproved of this apotheosis to a living person, his friends dared go no farther. The statue was all ready, and they were probably waiting for his death to erect it.

Certainly it is glorious to think that your funeral will have a civic solemnization, and that one will fall only to be raised again in marble or bronze ; but this empty pedestal, dazzling in the sunlight, gave Roumestan, every time that he passed it, the impression of a family tomb, and it needed the sight of the arena to drive away his gloomy ideas. The old amphitheatre divested of the noisy animation of Sunday, and having recovered its solemn aspect of useless and pretentious ruins, was seen through the close grating with its broad, cold, damp corridors, where the sun fell in spots, and where the stones were becoming loosened by the footsteps of centuries.

"How sad it is!" said Hortense, missing Valmajour's tambourine; but it was not sad to Numa. The happiest days of his childhood filled with joy and hope had been spent there. Oh the Sundays of the bull-fight, the loitering around fences with other children as poor as he, none of them having a ten-cent piece to purchase a ticket! The burning afternoon sun presenting their forbidden pleasure in a mirage, they looked at what little the solid walls allowed them to see,—a corner of the circus, the legs of the bull-fighters enclosed in bright stockings, the furious hoofs of the beasts, and the dust of the combat rising with the shouts, laughter, bravos, bellowing, and roaring from the crowded building. The desire to enter became too great. Then the boldest would watch the moment when the sentinel moved away, and, with a slight effort, would slip between two bars. "I always passed through," said Roumestan beamingly; and the whole story of his life was resumed in these two words. Whether by chance or skill, however small the space in a fence, the Southerner always passed through.

"I can't help it," he added with a sigh: "I was more slender then than now;" and his eyes wandered with a comical expression of regret from the close railing of the arcades to the broad white waistcoat which fitted close to the figure of a man of forty years.

Behind the vast building, the *berline*, sheltered from the wind and sun, was awaiting him. He had to awaken Ménicle, who, wrapped in his heavy royal-blue surtout, was asleep on the box between two baskets of provisions; but, before entering, Roumestan pointed out to his sister-in-law an old inn in the distance, "Au Petit-Saint-Jean, stage and express office," of which the white masonry and broad open sheds filled a corner in the Place des Arènes,

and were encumbered with unharnessed dusty stages, and rural see-saw carts with shafts in the air, under their gray awnings.

"Look there, little sister," he said with emotion. "It was there I set out for Paris, twenty-one years ago. We had no railroad then. People took the stage to Montélimart, then the Rhône. Heavens! how glad I was, and how your great Paris frightened me! It was evening, I remember."

He spoke quickly, without arranging his words in order, but according as his thoughts pressed on him.

"It was ten o'clock of an evening in November. How bright the moon was! The conductor, named Fouque, was a great person. While he was harnessing, we walked up and down with Bompard,—you know Bompard well. We were already great friends. He was, or at least he imagined he was, a student of pharmacy, and expected to meet me. We planned together, and indulged in dreams of the future, to make the journey seem shorter. Meanwhile he, being older, encouraged me, and gave me advice. My fear was wholly of being ridiculous. Aunt Portal had made me for the journey a large cloak called a raglan. I was a little anxious about aunt Portal's raglan. Then Bompard made me walk before him. *Tu*, I still see my shadow by my side; and gravely, with that way of his, he would say to me, 'You will do, my good fellow: you are not ridiculous.' Ah, youth, youth!"

Hortense, who now feared that she would never leave this town where the great man found an eloquent cause for delay under every stone, pushed him gently towards the *berline*.

"Suppose we get in, Numa: we can talk just as well on the way."

CHAPTER V.

VALMAJOUR.

FROM the town of Aps to the mountain of Cordova the journey is little more than two hours long, especially when the wind is behind. Harnessed to its two old Camargue horses, the *berline* went on of itself, pushed along by the south wind, which shook and raised it, depressing and swelling its leather hood in the manner of a sail. Here it no longer roared as around the ramparts and under the arches of the posterns; but blew freely, and unimpeded drove before it the undulating verdure of the wide plain, where a few remote cottages and an isolated farm, a bit of gray color in a cluster of greenery, seemed like a village scattered by the tempest. It swept along a gust of smoke across the sky, in rapid sprays over the tall corn and olive fields, making their silver leaves glitter; and with backward sweeps, and raising in white waves the dust grating under the wheels, it beat down the rows of closely-set cypresses, and the Spanish reeds with their long rustling leaves, and caused the illusion of a fresh brook on the border of the road. When it was still for a moment, as if out of breath, one felt oppressed by the heavy summer air, the African heat rising from the ground, and quickly dispelling the healthful, refreshing squall that extended its vivifying force to the most distant part of the horizon, as far as the small, dull, grayish hills which are in the background of every

provincial landscape, but which the sunset colors with fairy-like tints.

They did not meet very many persons. Here and there was a truck coming from the quarry with a load of very large hewn stones, which blinded one in the sunlight ; an old peasant woman from the Ville-des-Baux, bending under a great basket of aromatic herbs ; a mendicant monk wearing his hood, with a bag on his back and a rosary at his side, his skull bare, moist, and shining as a Durance pebble-stone ; people returning from a pilgrimage ; a car-load of women and young girls in their best dresses, with handsome black eyes, bold *chignons*, and light floating ribbons, coming from Sainte-Baume or Notre-Dame-de-Lumière. Well, the mistral gave to all this—to the hard labor, the poverty, and superstition of the country—the same glow of health and good humor, gathering and mingling together the “*dia, hue !*” of the wagoners, and the bells and the blue glass rings on the animals, the chants of the monk, the shrill canticles of the pilgrims, and the popular refrain which Roumestan, excited by the native air, spouted with grand lyric gestures, at the top of his voice, and which poured out through the two doors,—

“Beau soleil de la Provence,
Gai compère du mistral.”

Then, interrupting himself, he exclaimed,—

“*Hé ! Ménicle, Ménicle !*”

“Monsieur Numa?”

“What is that hovel yonder on the other side of the Rhône?”

“That, Monsieur Numa, is the *Fonjon* of Queen Jeanne.”

“Ah, yes ; so it is. I remember ; poor *Fonjon* ! its name is as changed as itself.”

Then Numa told Hortense the story of the royal dungeon ; for he knew by heart its provincial legend. This ruined, mouldy tower above them dated from the Saracen invasion, but was not so old as the abbey, of which one could see close to it a section of partly crumbled walls open against the sky, with narrow windows in a row, and a broad arched doorway. He showed her the path, visible on the side of the rocky hillside, along which the monks went to the pond that shone like a crystal cup, to fish for carps and eels for the abbé's table. He remarked, as he passed, that in the finest situations the reflective, epicurean life of convents was established ; that they passed a lofty, dreamy existence on the heights, but descended to lay a tithe on all the wealth of nature and the surrounding villages. Ah ! the middle ages of Provence, the beautiful age of troubadours, and the courts of love. Now brambles loosened the stones over which the Stephanettes and Azalaïs had let trail their narrow robes ; the sea-eagles and the owls screeched at night where the troubadours sang. But did not the clear landscape of the Alpilles bear some resemblance to a bouquet of dainty elegance, of Italian softness, like a whisper of a lute or of a violin, floating in the pure air ? And Numa, becoming excited, and forgetting that he had only his sister-in-law and Ménicle's blue surtout for an audience, launched forth, after a few recitals about the banquets or academical sittings of that region, into one of those ingenious and brilliant improvisations that made him a descendant of the gay provincial troubadours.

“There is Valmajour !” suddenly said aunt Portal's coachman, leaning over to point out the height with the end of his whip.

They had left the broad road, and were following a ladder-like ascent on the sides of the Cordova mountain, — a narrow path, slippery on account of the tufts of lavender, the dry perfume of which was exhaled at every turn of the wheel. On a plateau, half way up, at the foot of a black notched tower, rose the roofs of the farm-buildings. It was there that the Valmajours had lived, from father to son, for years and years, on the site of the old château, the name of which had remained with them. And who knows? Perhaps these peasants were descended from the princes of Valmajour, who were allied to the counts of Provence and the house of the Baux. This supposition, imprudently uttered by Roumestan, was quite to Hortense's taste, who thus explained to herself the truly noble ways of the tambourinist. As they talked about it in the carriage, Ménicle on his box listened to them in amazement. This name of Valmajour was widely known in the country: there were Valmajours in the upper and Valmajours in the lower part, as they happened to live in the valley or on the mountain. "All of them must be great lords." But the sly provincial kept the remark to himself. And while they were slowly advancing through the bare and grandiose landscape, the young girl, whom Roumestan's lively conversation had plunged into the depths of an historical romance, in a highly-colored dream of the past, perceiving above her, near a pillar at the foot of the ruins, a peasant woman partly turned towards her, with her hand over her eyes, watching the comers, fancied her some princess with hair dyed with henna, and sitting on the top of her tower in the pose for a vignette.

The illusion was hardly dispelled, when the travellers alighting from their carriage found themselves opposite

the sister of the tambourine-player, who was occupied in weaving willow baskets for silk-worms. She did not rise : although Ménicle cried to her from a distance, " *V'z*, Audiberte, here are some people to see your brother." And her delicate, regular, oval face, of the color of an unplucked olive, betrayed neither joy nor surprise, but preserved the intent expression that drew together her thick black eyebrows, and firmly united them in a straight line below her obstinate forehead. Roumestan, rather struck by this reserve, announced himself : —

"Numa Roumestan, the deputy."

"Oh, I know you well !" said she gravely, letting her work fall in a heap by her side. "Come in a moment : my brother will be here presently."

When she stood, the lady of the abbey lost her distinction. Having a very small figure with a full bust, she walked in an awkward, mincing way, that marred the effect of her pretty face in delicate relief to the small Arles cap and broad muslin fichu with bluish folds. They entered. The peasant's cottage, supported by the ruins of a tower, had a grand air, having arms in the stone above the door sheltered by a porch of reeds cracking in the sun, and a large checked canvas hung as a *portière* as a protection from the mosquitoes. The hall, an ancient guard-hall with white walls, and a ceiling with hollow covings, and a high antique chimney, was lighted only through greenish window-panes and the canvas covering at the entrance.

In this dim light one could distinguish the black wooden kneading-trough in the form of a sarcophagus, carved in sprigs and flowers, and surmounted by a wicker basket, with small Moorish spires, in which, in all provincial farms, bread is kept fresh. Two or three sacred

images, the Virgin Mary, Martha, and the Tarasque ; a small red copper lamp of ancient form hung on a beautiful imitation of white wood carved by a shepherd ; on each side of the chimney the salt-box and the flour-bin ; with a marine shell to recall the animal kingdom, whose pearly substance glittered on the mantelpiece, — completed the adornment of the vast room. The long table extended the length of the hall, and was flanked by benches and stools. On the ceiling was suspended a string of onions black with flies that buzzed every time that the *portière* of the entrance was raised.

“Be seated, sir ; and you must take *grand-boire* with us, madame.” The *grand-boire* is the luncheon of the provincial peasant. It is partaken of in the fields, in the very place where they work, under a tree when one is to be had, in the shadow of a mill, or in the hollow of a ditch. But Valmajour and his father, who worked close at hand on their property, came to the house for it. The table already awaited them, on which were two or three small plates hollowed out of yellow clay, with preserved olives, and a Roman salad shining with oil. In the willow shell in which were placed a bottle and glasses, Roumestan thought he saw wine.

“Then you have a vineyard in this region?” he asked in an amiable manner, trying to tame the queer little savage. At the word “vineyard” she sprang up with the leap of a goat stung by an aspic, and her voice was immediately raised to a pitch of fury. “A vineyard? Ah, indeed! Had they still a vineyard? Out of five they were able to save only one, the smallest, and even that one six months in the year had to be kept under water from the canal, which almost took their eyes out of their heads. Whose fault was it? The fault of the Reds, of

those pigs, those monsters, the Reds, and their irreligious Republic, that had let loose in the land all the abominations of hell!" As she spoke with passion, her eyes became blacker, and of a murderous black, the whole of her pretty face was convulsed and grimacing, her mouth contorted, and the knot of her eyebrows gathered into a big seam in the middle of her forehead. That she continued to be busy in all her anger, prepared the fire, the coffee for the men, now rising, now stooping, holding in her hands the bellows and the coffee-pot, or burning vine-shoots which she brandished like the torch of a Fury, was the drollest part. Then suddenly she became more gentle, remarking, "Here is my brother."

The rustic curtain was pushed aside, admitting with a flood of white light the tall figure of Valmajour, and a little old man with a smooth, sunburnt face, who was crooked and black as the clump of sickly vines. Neither father nor son was disturbed more than Audiberte by the visitors they were receiving; and, immediately upon being introduced, took their places around the *grand-boire*, which was re-enforced by all the provisions taken from the *berline*, before which the eyes of the elder Valmajour, who appeared to be quite a gourmand, lighted up as with little brisk flames. Roumestan, who could not recover from the slight impression he produced on these peasants, immediately spoke of the great success in the arena on Sunday. It must have pleased the father.

"Certainly, certainly," grumbled the old man, cutting his olives with his knife. "I, also, in my time, won a tambourinist's prize."

And in his wicked smile could be recognized the same turn of the mouth which the daughter in her anger showed a moment before. The peasant woman, who was very

calm just then, was sitting near the ground on the stones of the fireplace, with her plate on her knees ; for, although she was absolute mistress in the house, she followed the Provençal custom, which does not permit women to take their place at the table with the men. But from this humiliating position she attentively followed all that was said, and moved her head when hearing about the *fête* in the arena. She did not like the tambourine. "Ah, *nâni!* Her mother's death was owing to it, from the angry excitement caused by papa's music. It was only a drunkard's profession, which disturbed every one at work, and cost more money than it brought in."

"Well, let him come to Paris," said Roumestan. "I promise you that his tambourine will earn him money."

And on account of the incredulity of this innocent girl he tried to explain to her something about the caprices of Paris, and how dearly he had to pay for them. He told of the former success of M. Mathurin, the player of a bagpipe in the ¹ "Closerie des Genêts." What a difference there was between the Breton bagpipe that was so coarse and noisy, made to lead Esquimaux dances on the borders of the North Sea, and the tambourine of Provence so slender and elegant ! All the Parisian ladies lost their heads over it, and wished to dance the *farandole*. Hortense was carried away also, and expressed her admiration, while the tambourine-player smiled vaguely and smoothed his brown moustache like a conqueror, like a handsome Nicholas.

"But, really, what do you think he would earn with his music?" asked the peasant woman.

Roumestan reflected. He could not say exactly. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred francs.

¹ A French drama by Frédéric Soulié (1846). — TRANS.

"A month?" asked the father with enthusiasm.

"Oh, no! a day."

The three peasants started, then looked at each other. From any one but "Moussu Numa," the deputy, and member of the General Council, they would have thought it farcical, a *galéjade*. But from him it carried weight. Two hundred francs a day! *foutré!* The musician on his part was all ready; but the sister, who was more prudent, would have preferred Roumestan to sign a paper, and composedly, with lowered eyes, lest their longing glow for lucre betray her, she talked the matter over in a hypocritical voice. Valmajour was very necessary at home, *Pécairé*. He took care of the property, worked and trimmed the vineyard, the father no longer having strength. What would they do if he were to leave? and what would become of him alone in Paris? He would surely suffer. What would he do with his two hundred francs a day, in that great city? Her voice became hard when speaking of this money which she could not have the care of, and could not shut up in the depths of her drawers.

"Well, then," said Roumestan, "come to Paris with him."

"How about the house?"

"Lease or sell it. You can buy a handsome one when you return."

He paused at an anxious look from Hortense; and, as if seized with remorse for disturbing the repose of these worthy people, added, "After all, there is something else in life besides money. You are happy as you are."

Audiberte hastily interrupted him. "Happy? our life is very hard, and truly not what it used to be." And she began again to groan over the vineyards, the madder, the

vermilion, the silk-worms, and all the vanished wealth of the country. They had to run about in the sun, and work like satyrs. They would have, it is true, in the future the inheritance of cousin Puyfourcat, who had been a colonist in Algeria for thirty years; but this Algeria was so far away in Africa. All at once the astute little person, in order to stir up "*Moussu Numa*," whom she reproached for having grown too cool, said to her brother in a cat-like way, with her coaxing sing-song intonation,—

"*Qué*, Valmajour, supposing you play a little air to please this beautiful young lady."

Ah, sly creature! she made no mistake. At the first drawing of the bow, at the first pearly trill, Roumestan was again captivated, and made delirious. The boy played before the cottage, leaning on the edge of an old well whose arched ironwork, with a wild fig-tree intertwined around it, wonderfully became his elegant figure and brown complexion. With his bare arms and open bosom, and dressed in his dusty working-clothes, he had even a prouder, nobler manner than in the arena, where his grace adorned every thing with a theatrical finish; and the old airs of the rustic instrument, made poetical by the silence and solitude of a beautiful landscape awakening the gilded ruins from their stony dream, floated like swallows down those majestic slopes, gray with lavender, and broken with patches of wheat, dead vines, and of broad-leaved mulberry-trees, whose shadows began to lengthen as it became brighter. The wind had gone down; and the sun, as it set, streamed over the violet line of the Alpilles, and reflected in the hollow of the rocks a true mirage of ponds of liquid porphyry and of molten gold; and at the horizon was a quivering light, like the tightly

drawn chords of a burning lyre, of which the continuous chant of the grasshoppers and the beating of the tambourine seemed to be the resonant tones.

Silent and enchanted, while seated on the parapet of the ancient dungeon, and leaning her elbow on a fragment of a column which sheltered a stunted pomegranate-tree, Hortense listened and admired, and her little romantic head, filled with legends collected on the way, wandered. She saw the old castle rise from its ruins, its towers stand up, its posterns become rounded, and its cloister-like arches become peopled with belles in long corsages, and with pale complexions which the great heat did not color. She herself was a princess of the Baux, with a pretty missal name ; and the musician who gave her the serenade was a prince, the last of the Valmajours, in a peasant's garb.

So when the song was ended, as they say in the chronicles of the courts of love, she broke from a branch above her head a sprig of pomegranate, from which hung the flower too heavy with purple life, and held it out as a reward for the serenade to the handsome musician, who gallantly fastened it to the strings of his tambourine.

CHAPTER VI.

A MINISTER.

THREE months have passed since that journey to the Mount of Cordova. Parliament has just opened at Versailles in a November deluge, which lowers the misty sky to unite with the basins in the park, and envelops the two Chambers in humid dulness and darkness, but does not cool political anger. The session opens formidably. Trains with deputies and senators cross and follow each other, hiss and sputter, and shake their menacing smoke, animated in their way by hatreds and intrigues, which they carry along through torrents of rain; and, drowning at this hour in the car the sound of the wheels on the iron, discussions continue with the same bitterness and the same fury as in the tribune. The most agitated and noisy of all is Roumestan. He has already delivered two speeches since he entered. He speaks to the committee, in the passages, at the station, at the refreshment-room, and makes the glass roofs of photograph-saloons, where are assembled all belonging to the Right, tremble. Only his heavy, restless profile, his large face always excited, the curve of his broad shoulders dreaded by the minister whom he is about to "fell" according to the rules, as a supple and vigorous combatant of the South, are seen. Ah! how far away is the blue sky, the tambourines, the locusts,—all the luminous scenes of vacation! They have gone forever. Numa, caught in the whirlwind of

his double life of an advocate and politician, does not think of them a moment: for after the example of his old master Sagnier, when entering the Chamber, he has not given up the Palace; and every evening from six to eight there is a crowd at the door of his office in the Rue Scribe, which one enters as he would that of a legation. The first secretary, the right arm of the leader, his adviser and friend, is an excellent business lawyer, called Méjean, a Southerner, like all who surround Numa, but from that part of the South called Cévenol, the stony region, which is more like Spain than Italy, and preserves in its habits and speech the prudent reserve and good practical sense of Sancho.

Thick-set, robust, and already bald, with the bilious complexion of great workers, Méjean performs the whole work of the office, puts away the papers, prepares speeches, and tries to add a background of facts to the sonorous phrases of his friend, his future brother-in-law say the well-informed. The other secretaries, MM. de Rochemaure and Lappara, two young licentiates, related to the oldest provincial nobility, are there only for show, and are making their political novitiate at Roumestan's. Lappara, a tall, handsome lad, with fine limbs, and a warm complexion and tawny beard, the son of the old Marquis of Lappara, a chief of the party in the Bordelais, is a good specimen of this type of the Creole of the South, boastful, adventurous, and fond of duels and *escampativos*. Five years of Paris, one hundred thousand francs for "trickery" at the club, paid for by his mother's diamonds, sufficed to give him the accent of the Boulevard, and the fine tone of a crisp and golden crust. Quite another person is the Viscount Charlexis de Rochemaure, the compatriot of Numa, brought up by the Fa-

thers of the Assumption, having pursued his law-studies in the country under the surveillance of his mother and an abbé, and preserving from his education the ingenuousness and timidity of a Levite in contrast with his royal, Louis XIII. manner, both that of a man of refinement and a simpleton.

The great Lappara tries to initiate this young Pourceaugnac into Parisian life. He teaches him how to dress, what is and is not *chic*, to walk with his neck held forward, the mouth drawn up, and to sit with his limbs stretched out so as not to leave a mark of his knees in his pantaloons. He wishes him to lose that innocent faith in men and things, and that taste for jargon, which ranks him among scribbling clerks. But no : the viscount likes work ; and when Roumestan does not take him to the Chamber or Palace, as to-day, he remains sitting for hours, drawing up contracts before a long table placed for the secretaries on one side of the patron's office. The Bordelais has rolled a cushion against the window ; and in the declining day, with a cigar between his teeth, and with his limbs stretched out, he looks through the rain at the smoking, sticky asphaltum, and the long line of carriages with tall whips that were grazing the sidewalk on Mme. Roumestan's reception-day. What an endless throng of people, and how many carriages kept arriving ! Lappara, who boasts of being intimately acquainted with the great livery of Paris, announces in turn, in a loud voice, — Duchess of San Donnino, Marquis de Bellegarde, Mazette, the Mauconseils also. "*Ah ça, what is going on?*" and turning to a tall, slender person who was drying before the fire his knitted gloves, and colored pantaloons that were too thin for the season, and carefully turned up over cloth boots, he asked, "Do you know any thing, Bompard?"

"Yes, of course."

Bompard, Roumestan's Mameluke, is like a fourth secretary, who does outside work, goes after news, and parades the glory of the patron through Paris. This profession enriched him but little, judging by his appearance; but it was not Numa's fault. One repast a day, a half-louis from time to time, was all this singular parasite, whose life was a problem to his most intimate friends, would accept from any one. To ask him if he knows any thing, to doubt the imagination of Bompard, proves one to be stupid and ignorant.

"Yes, gentlemen, and something very serious."

"What is it?"

"Some one has just fired upon the marshal."

There was consternation for a moment.

The young men looked at each other and at Bompard, then at Lappara, who, stretched out on his cushion, quietly asks, —

"Where is your asphaltum, my good fellow?"

"Ah! *vai*, the asphaltum. I have a better project." And, without becoming astonished at the slight effect produced by the marshal's assassination, he relates his new plan.

"It is a superb one, and very simple."

It was to sweep away the one hundred and twenty thousand francs premium which the Swiss government gives each year for federal shots. Bompard in his youth fired skilfully at larks. He would only have to practise his hand a little, and he would have one hundred and twenty thousand francs assured income to the end of his life, and it would be easily earned beside. He could reach Switzerland by travelling a few days from canton to canton, with a rifle on the shoulder.

The visionary became animated, and began to describe the journey. He climbed the glaciers, descended valleys and torrents, and shook down avalanches, before the breathless young people. Of all the inventions of this frenzied brain, this was the most extraordinary, and was explained with an air of conviction, with burning eyes, and an inward fire, that left deep wrinkles on the forehead.

The sudden arrival of Méjean, returning from the palace out of breath, stopped these wanderings.

"Great news," he said, throwing down his bag on the table. "The minister is deposed."

"Impossible !"

"Roumestan has charge of the Bureau of Public Instruction."

"I knew it," said Bompard ; and, seeing their smiles, he continued, "*Parfaitemain*, gentlemen : I was down there. I have just returned."

"You did not say so."

"Of what use? They would never have believed me. It is the fault of my accent," he added with a resigned candor, the ludicrousness of which was lost in the general excitement.

Roumestan a minister !

"Ah ! my children, what a sly rogue the patron is !" repeated the great Lappara, falling back in his arm-chair, laughing, and throwing his legs up to the ceiling. "Did he not manage the affair well?"

Rochemaire drew himself up as if scandalized.

"Let us not speak of cunning, my dear fellow. Roumestan is conscience itself. He goes straight ahead like a bullet."

"In the first place, my dear fellow, there are no longer bullets : there are shells only, and a shell does this." With the tip of his boot he indicated its course.

“Humbug !”

“Booby !”

“Gentlemen, gentlemen !”

Méjean on his part reflected on the singular nature of this complicated Roumestan, who, even when seen close by, could be judged so differently. “A sly rogue,” “conscience itself.” This double current of opinions was found again in the public. He who knew him better knew what a background of levity and idleness modified the temperament of this ambitious man, who was both better and worse than his reputation ; but was the news about the portfolio really true ? Curious to assure himself of this, Méjean cast a glance at himself in the mirror, and, crossing the landing, passed on into Mme. Roumestan’s apartments.

On entering the ante-chamber where the footmen were waiting with fur cloaks on their arms, a murmur of voices deadened by the high ceilings and the cumbersome luxurious hangings was heard. Ordinarily Rosalie received in her little *salon*, furnished like a winter garden with light seats and fanciful tables, and with the daylight softly flickering between the shining green leaves of the plants against the window-panes. It answered for the private life of a Parisian *bourgeoise* lost in the shadow of her great husband, too disinterested to be ambitious, and remaining outside of the small circle where, though superior, she was known only as a good person without importance ; but to-day the two reception-rooms were filled and noisy, and people, her friends and acquaintances in general, — faces to which Rosalie could not have attached a name, — were continually arriving. Very simply attired in a dress shaded with violet which set off well her slender figure and the elegant harmony of

her whole person, she received each one with the same smile, which was somewhat haughty, — the *réfréjon* air of which aunt Portal formerly used to speak. She was not in the least dazzled at her new fortune, but rather surprised and full of anxiety, which, however, in no way betrayed itself. She went busily around from group to group, while the daylight was rapidly fading on the first story of the house ; and when the servants brought in the lamps, and lighted the candelabra, the *salon*, with its rich glittering stuffs, and Oriental carpets with colors of precious stones, assumed a festal air. “Ah, M. Mé-jean !” Rosalie slipped away a moment, and stepped towards him, happy at finding again in so large a company an intimate friend. Their two natures understood each other. The cooled-off Southerner and the sensitive Parisian lady had similar ways of seeing and judging, and balanced the weaknesses and passions of Numa.

“I came to assure myself that the news is true. I do not doubt it any longer,” he said, pointing to the well-filled *salons*. She passed him the despatch which she had received from her husband, and said in a low tone, “What do you think of it?”

“It is a heavy responsibility, but you will be near him.”

“And you also,” she said, pressing his hands, and leaving him in order to speak to new visitors. But they were always coming and never going. They were waiting for the leader, from whose lips they wished to hear the details of the meeting, and how with a movement of the shoulder he had jostled them all. Already of the new-comers some brought echoes from the Chamber, and fragments of discourses. There was a general stir and murmur of joy. Women especially showed themselves curious and excited : under the great hats which entered on the scene

that winter, the cheek-bones of their pretty faces had that light-pink fire and fever which one sees on the players of Monte-Carlo around *trente et quarante*. Is it the felt hats with long feathers, the fashion of the Fronde, which thus inclines them to politics? For all these ladies seemed very well informed, and in the purest parliamentary language, waving their little muffs to obtain a hearing, celebrated the glory of the leader. There was only one exclamation everywhere: "What a man! what a man!"

In a corner the old Béchut, professor in the College of France, who was very ugly, with the very prominent nose of a scholar projecting over his books, took a text from the success of Roumestan to illustrate one of his favorite theses, — that the weakness of modern society is on account of the place that women and children occupy in it. Ignorance and rags, caprice and levity.

"Well, monsieur, Roumestan's strength is in this: he is childless, and has been able to escape feminine influence. What a straight, firm line also he has followed! Not a deviation, not a break."

The grave person to whom he addressed himself, the master of ceremonies at the Court of Accounts, a man with an innocent eye and a little round, shaved head, in which thoughts rattled like a dry seed in an empty gourd, drew himself up approvingly like a magistrate, as if to say, "And I, too, am a superior man. I also escape the influence of which you speak."

Seeing that people were approaching to listen, the *savant* became animated, quoted historical examples, — Cæsar, Richelieu, Frederick, Napoleon, — and proved scientifically that woman in the scale of thinking beings was several degrees below man. "Indeed, if we examine the cellular tissues"—

It was more curious to examine the faces of the wives of these two gentlemen, who, seated side by side, and drinking a cup of tea, listened to them ; for they had just come from serving a five-o'clock lunch, from which the clicking of delicate spoons on Japanese porcelain, the warm vapor of the *samovar*, and the pastry fresh from the oven, mingled with the buzz of conversation. The younger, Mme. de Boë, by her family influence had made the man with the gourd-like appearance her husband, a broken-down nobleman ruined with debts, and a magistrate of the Court of Accounts ; and people longed to make themselves acquainted with the condition of the public finances in the hands of this swell who had so quickly consumed his wife's fortune and his own. Mme. Béchut, old, handsome, and still possessing large spiritual eyes and a face with delicate features, of which the mouth alone, by a kind of sad downward contraction, told of struggles with life and the wear and tear of unceasing, unscrupulous ambition, had wholly devoted herself to pushing into high places the commonplace mediocrity of her *savant*, and had, by relations that were unfortunately too well known, forced open for him the doors of the Institute and the College of France. There was a complete Parisian poem in the smiles which the two women exchanged over their cups. Perhaps in looking around among these gentlemen many others might have been found whom feminine influence had not injured.

Suddenly Roumestan entered. In the midst of the hubbub of welcome he crossed the *salon* quickly, went straight to his wife, and kissed her on both cheeks before Rosalie could prevent this rather embarrassing manifestation, which was the best refutation of the assertions of the

physiologist. All the ladies shouted, "Bravo!" There was more hand-shaking and congratulations; then an attentive silence, when the leader, leaning on the mantle-piece, began to read the rapid bulletin of the day. The grand movement contemplated for a week, the marches and countermarches, the mad rage of the Left at the moment of defeat, his own triumph, and noisy bursting of the people into the tribune, even the intonations of his pretty answer to the marshal,—"That depends on you, M. le Président,"—and every thing said and done was noted and commented on with contagious gayety and warmth. Then Roumestan became grave, and enumerated the heavy responsibilities of his post: the university to reform, and all the young men to prepare for the realization of great hopes,—the speech was understood, and greeted with a hurrah,—but he would surround himself by enlightened men, and would appeal to every one's good-will and devotion. And with eyes full of feeling he sought them in the circle that closed around him: "An appeal to my friend Béchut, and to you too, my dear de Boë." The hour was so solemn that no one asked himself in what respect the dulness of the young master of ceremonies could serve the reforms of the university. Besides, the number of individuals of that calibre whose co-operation in the arduous duties of public instruction Roumestan had asked in the afternoon was truly incalculable. In fine arts he felt himself more at ease, and no doubt his request for aid would not be refused. A flattering murmur of laughter and exclamations prevented him from continuing. On this subject there was but one voice in Paris, even among the most hostile. Numa was the proper man. In short, they were going to have a jury, lyric theatres, and an official art. But the

new minister cut short these dithyrambics, and observed in a familiar, joking tone, that the new cabinet was almost wholly composed of Southerners ; and that of six ministers Bordelais, Périgord, Languedoc, and Provence had furnished four. Becoming excited, he cried, "Ah, the South is rising ! the South is rising ! Paris is ours. We hold every thing. You must decide on your course, gentlemen. For the second time the Latins have conquered Gaul !"

With his medallion face, and the broad, flat lines of the cheeks, with his warm complexion and brusque, free-and-easy ways in this very Parisian *salon*, he seemed a true Latin of the conquest. At the laughter and applause excited by his closing words, he quickly left the chimney-corner, like a good comedian who knows enough to retire immediately after producing an effect, beckoned to Méjean to follow him, and disappeared through one of the inner doors, leaving Rosalie to excuse him. He was to dine at the marshal's, at Versailles, and there remained hardly time enough to prepare himself and give a few signatures.

"Come and dress me," he said to the servant, who was about to set the table for three, Numa, Rosalie, and Bompard, around the basket of flowers, which was renewed every day, and which Rosalie wished to be on the table at every meal. He felt quite happy at not having to dine there. The tumult of enthusiasm which he left behind him, and heard within the closed door, excited him to still seek society and brilliant scenes. Besides, no Southerner is a domestic man ; but the Northerner, of cold climates, invented home, and the intimacy of the family-circle, to which Provence and Italy prefer the terraces of the glaciers, and the noise and stir of the street.

Between the dining-room and the lawyer's office, it was necessary to cross the small reception-room, which at this hour was generally filled with anxious people watching the clock, their eyes bent on picture-papers as if absorbed in a law-suit. The evening Méjean had dismissed them, thinking that Numa could not give them a consultation. One, however, remained,—a tall fellow in ready-made clothes, and awkward as a *bourgeois* sub-officer.

"*Hé !* How do you do, M. Roumestan? How do you prosper? You have reached the place I wished you to have."

This accent, brown complexion, and simple, authoritative air, Numa remembered having met somewhere, but where?

"You do not recognize me now," said the man. "I am Valmajour, the tambourinist."

"Ah, yes ! I remember you very well."

He tried to pass on ; but Valmajour barred the way, planting himself before him, and telling him that he arrived two days ago. "Only, you know, I could not come sooner. When one lands a whole family in a country with which he is not familiar, it is difficult to find lodgings."

"A whole family?" said Roumestan, with his eyes wide open.

"*Bé !* yes, papa and my sister. We did just as you told us."

The giver of promises made an embarrassed, scornful movement, as always when he found himself confronted by a demand for payment of a note that was given with enthusiasm, out of the necessity of speech, of granting and being agreeable. *Mon Dieu !* He asked nothing

better than to serve this worthy fellow. He would consider and find some way ; but he was very much hurried this evening. "Exceptional circumstances, the favor with which the Chief of State" — Observing that the peasant did not go away, he said brusquely, "Come this way ;" and they passed into the study.

While sitting in his office, he read and hastily signed several letters. Valmajour looked at the vast room, sumptuously carpeted and furnished, the bookcases around it surmounted by bronzes, busts, objects of art, souvenirs of glorious causes, and the portrait of the king, signed with a few lines ; and he felt impressed by the solemnity of the place, the stiffness of the carved seats, and the large number of books, and, above all, by the presence of the servant, a correct individual dressed in black, going and coming, and carefully laying clothing and fresh linen on the arm-chairs. But yonder, in the warm light of the lamp, the kind broad face and well-known profile of Roumestan re-assured him somewhat. When his courier was ready, the great man passed into the hands of the *valet-de-chambre*, and with his leg held out, that his pantaloons and socks might be drawn off, he questioned the tambourinist, and learned with terror, that, before coming, the Valmajours had sold every thing, — the mulberry-trees, vineyards, and the farm.

"Sold the farm, unhappy man?"

"Yes : my sister was, indeed, somewhat frightened, but father and I held firm. I said to him, 'What do we risk, since Numa makes us leave?'"

Only one as innocent as he would dare speak of the minister, to his face, in this unceremonious way. But Roumestan did not notice it. He was thinking of the numerous enemies which this incorrigible mania for prom-

ising had already made him. What need was there, he asked himself, to go and disturb the life of these poor devils? The slightest details of his visit to the Mount of Cordova returned to him, the resistance of the peasant woman, and the remarks he made to influence her to decide. And why? What demon was there in him? This peasant was frightful. As for his talent, Numa remembered little of it, thinking only of the burden of all this tribe falling on his shoulders. He heard in advance the reproaches of his wife, and felt the coldness of her severe look. "Words mean something." And in his new position, at the source of all favors, what embarrassment he would create for himself with his fatal benevolence! But the idea that he was a minister, and the consciousness of his power, re-assured him almost immediately. In such a high position as his, must foolish trifles still trouble him? A sovereign master of fine arts, with every theatre in his power, it would be easy for him to serve this unfortunate man. Having risen again in his own esteem, he changed his tune towards the countryman, and, to prevent him from becoming familiar, solemnly taught him, from his great height, to what important dignities he had been elevated since morning. It was a misfortune that at this moment he was half-clad, with his feet in silk stockings resting on the carpet, and looked insignificant but corpulent in his white flannel drawers trimmed with pink. Valmajour did not seem particularly impressed, the magical word "minister" not connecting itself in his mind with this stout man in shirt-sleeves. He continued to call him "Moussu Numa," spoke to him of his music, and of the new airs he had learned. He did not fear any of the Paris tambourinists now.

"Wait, you shall see."

He sprang forward to bring his tambourine from the antechamber, but Roumestan detained him.

"I tell you that I am in a hurry, *qué diable !*"

"Very well, very well: some other day," said the peasant good-naturedly. And seeing Méjean approach, he thought he owed it to his admiration to tell him the story of the flute with three stops:—

"It came to me at night, while listening to the night-ingle. I thought to myself, What, Valmajour!"

It was the same little story he had told in the country, on the platform of the amphitheatre. On account of the success at that time, he had artlessly repeated it word for word; but he now delivered it with a certain timid hesitation, and a nervousness which increased every moment, as he saw Roumestan transformed before him, under the broad shirt-bosom of fine linen with pearl buttons, and the black coat of a stiff cut, which the *valet-de-chambre* put on him.

Just then Moussu Numa seemed to him to have grown tall. His face, to which his anxiety not to crumple his white-lawn tie gave a solemn stiffness, was lighted by pale reflections from the grand ribbon of the order of St. Anne around his neck, and from the broad star of Isabella the Catholic, like a sun on the dull cloth. Suddenly the peasant, seized with great respect and awe, understood that there was near him one of the privileged of the earth, a mysterious, almost chimerical being, the powerful fetish towards whom vows, desires, supplications, and prayers rise only in formal documents, one so high that the humble never see him, and so haughty that they speak his name only in an under-tone, and with caution and fear and the emphatic tone of ignorance,—the minister!

Poor Valmajour was so disturbed that he hardly heard the kind words with which Roumestan dismissed him, urging him to return and see him, but not until a fortnight, when he should be installed in the ministry.

"Very well, very well, M. le Ministre." He backed towards the door, dazzled by the brilliancy of the official orders and the extraordinary expression of the transfigured Numa. The latter was very much flattered at this sudden timidity, which gave him a high opinion of the majestic lip, the restrained gesture, and grave frown of the eyebrows, which he now called his ministerial air. His Excellency rolled towards the station a few seconds later, forgetting the ludicrous incident in the rocking of the *coupé* with the lighted lanterns, which was rapidly bearing him to new and lofty destinies. He was already preparing for the results of his first speech, and planning his famous circular to the rectors, and thinking of what the country and Europe would say next day on hearing of his nomination; when, at a turn of the boulevard, in a bright ray of gaslight, on the moist asphaltum, the form of the tambourinist appeared before him, planted on the edge of the sidewalk, his long box beating against his legs. Deafened and flurried, he waited to cross, until there was a lull in the passing of the carriages, which were innumerable at that hour when all Paris is in a hurry to return home, the little hand-carts filing between the wheels of hacks, and the crowded omnibuses with the imperials swaying, and the cow-herd's horn ringing on the tramways. In the approaching night, and the mist which the damp rain disengaged from this hot atmosphere and busy crowd, the unhappy man, with his eyes cast to the ground, as if they felt the weight of the high walls of the five-storied houses,

seemed lost and out of place. In this attitude, he so little resembled the proud Valmajour at the door of his *mas*, giving the key-note to the locusts with his tambourine, that Roumestan turned his eyes away, feeling overcome with remorse, which for a few moments cast something like a shadow of sadness over the radiance of his triumph.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE SAUMON.

WHILE waiting to be more completely settled, which could not be done until after the arrival of their furniture, which was *en route* by the slow express, the Valmajours had lodged in that famous passage of the Saumon, where travellers from Aps and its vicinity had always descended, and of which aunt Portal had kept so astonishing a remembrance. They occupied in the attic a sleeping-room and closet, the latter a kind of box in which the two men slept, having neither daylight nor air. The sleeping-room was not much larger, though it seemed to them grand, with its worm-eaten mahogany furniture, a wrinkled mothy hearth-rug on the faded floor, and a mansard window, which framed a piece of the sky as yellow and murky as the long pane of glass in the passage which was shaped like the back of an ass. In this niche they were reminded of the country by a strong odor of garlic and burnt onion, and the savory food which was cooking on a small stove. Valmajour's father, who was a great gourmand, and fond of company, would have preferred to go down to the *table-d'hôte*, whose white linen and plated oil and salt cruets inspired him with a desire to mingle in the lively conversation of the business men, whose laughter reached them, even as high as their fifth story, at meal-times. But the little Provençal woman was decidedly opposed to it.

Very much astonished, on arriving, at not finding the realization of Numa's fine promises of two hundred francs an evening, which, since the visit of the Parisians, rang in her imaginative little brain like the tumbling of piles of crowns, and frightened at the exorbitant price of every thing, she was attacked the very first day by that mania which the people of Paris call the "fear of poverty." All alone, with anchovies and olives, she would have managed, as in Lent, *te! parâi*; but "her men" had wolves' teeth, longer here than in the country, because here it was not so warm; and she was obliged every moment to partly open the bag, which was a large calico pocket made by herself, in which rattled the three thousand francs, the proceeds of the sale of their property. Therefore, when she changed a louis, it was done with an effort, with some force, as if she tore away the stones of her cottage, or gave the stocks of her last vineyard. Her peasant-like, defiant rapacity, and the fear of suffering from robbery, which had decided her to sell the farm instead of letting it, magnified the terrors of the unknown, in the gloom of this great Paris, which from her room above she heard rumble without seeing it, the noise of which in this busy corner of the market stopped neither night nor day, and continually made the glass ring on the old salver in her furnished hotel. Never a traveller lost in an unfrequented wood clung more energetically to his valise than the provincial lady to the bag at her side when she crossed the street in her green skirt and Arlesian head-dress, at which passers-by turned round to look when she entered shops, where her waddling gait, and manner of terming objects by odd names, and of calling the heads of celery *apis*, and egg-plants *mérinjanès*, made her, a Frenchwoman of the South, seem as lost and as much

of a stranger in the capital of France, as if she had arrived from Stockholm or Nidjni Novgorod. Very humble at first, and sweet as honey, she suddenly at the smile of a tradesman, or the rudeness of some one at her extravagant shopping, had an angry fit which showed itself in convulsions of her pretty, girlish, and sunburned face, and in wild gestures, and noisy, talkative vanity. Then the story of cousin Puyfourcat and his inheritance, the two hundred francs an evening, and their protector Roumestan of whom she talked, and whom she regarded as belonging absolutely to her, sometimes calling him Numa, sometimes the *ministre*, with an emphasis even more grotesque than her familiarity, was rolled out, and mingled with floods of *patois* and *ôil francisée*,¹ until, mistrust gaining the ascendancy, the peasant woman stopped, seized with a superstitious fear of her loquaciousness, and suddenly became silent, with her lips pressed together like the strings of her bag.

Circulating through the shopkeeper's doors, that were always open, the secrets of the houses of the neighborhood, together with odors of meadows, fresh meat, and colonial provisions, in a week she became the talk of the Rue Montmartre, which is crowded with shops. The questions jestingly addressed to her in the morning when the change was returned for her small purchases, the references to the constantly delayed *début* of her brother and to the inheritance of Bédouin, and her wounded self-love, even more than the fear of want, excited Audiberte against Numa, and against his promises, which she, like a true girl of the South, where words fly quicker than elsewhere, on account of the lightness of the air, at first justly mistrusted.

¹ A language spoken north of the Loire before the fifteenth century. — TRANS.

Ah, if they had secured a written promise ! was her constant thought ; and every morning, when Valmajour left for the ministry, she took pains to feel in the pocket of his overcoat for the sealed paper.

But Roumestan had other papers to sign than this, and other things on his mind than the tambourine. He established himself at the ministry with all the bustle, excitement of moving, and the general eagerness, shown in taking possession of new quarters. The vast rooms of the administrative hotel, as well as the enlarged views of his high situation, were new to him. To attain to the first rank, "to conquer Gaul," as he said, was not a difficult matter ; but it was difficult to maintain himself, and to justify his honors by intelligent reforms, and efforts for progress. Full of zeal, he sought information, consulted, conferred, and literally surrounded himself with light. With Béchut, the eminent professor, he studied the vices of university education, the means of extirpating the Voltairian spirit of lyceums ; and found help in the experience of his superintendent of fine arts, M. de la Calmette, who had been in office twenty-nine years ; and was also aided by De Cardaillac, the director of the Opera, who had recovered from three failures to rebuild from new plans the Conservatory, the Salon, and the Academy of Music.

The misfortune is, that he did not listen to these gentlemen, but talked for hours, and suddenly looking at his watch, would rise and hurriedly dismiss them. It was the hour for the Council and the Chamber.

"Heavens ! What a life, with not a minute to myself ! Of course, dear friend : send me your report quickly."

The reports were piled upon the desk of Méjean, who, notwithstanding his intelligence and good-will, had not

enough time for daily needs ; and the great reforms were left to slumber. Like all new ministers, Roumestan had brought his friends with him, the brilliant *personnel* of the Rue Scribe, the Baron de Lappara, and the Viscount de Rochemaure, who gave an aristocratic flavor to the new cabinet, who were, however, absolutely confused and ignorant of every question.

The first time that Valmajour presented himself in the Rue de Grenelle, he was received by Lappara, who occupied himself chiefly with fine arts, sending at every hour expresses, dragoons, and cuirassiers, to take to the young ladies of small theatres, in large ministerial envelopes, invitations to supper ; sometimes the envelope contained nothing, being intended to show the cuirassier, that he might relieve the minister of anxiety, after the failure to keep an engagement. The baron gave the tambourine-player the hearty but somewhat haughty reception of a great lord receiving one of his tenants. With his legs stretched out for fear of creasing his French blue pantaloons, he spoke to him from the tips of his lips, without ceasing to trim and polish his nails.

"Very difficult at this moment : the minister so busy. Soon, in a few days. You will be notified, my worthy man."

And as the musician innocently confessed that it was a rather urgent matter, and that their resources would not last forever, the baron, in his most serious manner, while placing his file on the edge of the desk, requested him to put a *tourniquet*¹ on his tambourine.

¹ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. — In France merchants sell cakes (wafers) shaped like a horn, which are contained in a cylindrical box with a movable cover, on which is a *tourniquet* — a kind of dial, with figures and a hand, as on a watch. For a couple of sous the merchant turns the hand, and the figure at which it stops indicates the number of wafers (*plaisirs*) one has obtained.

A *tourniquet* on his tambourine? Why?

"*Parbleu*, my good fellow, to make use of it in the dull season as a *boîte à plaisirs*."

On the next visit Valmajour had business with the Viscount de Rochemaure. The latter raised from a dusty file of papers, where it had entirely disappeared, his head, curled with hot tongs, and conscientiously studied the mechanism of the flute, took notes, tried to understand, and finally declared that it was chiefly intended for worship. Then the unhappy man no longer found any one, all the cabinet having gone to join the minister in the inaccessible regions where his Excellency hid himself. However, he lost neither his calmness nor courage, and always at the evasive answers and shrugging of shoulders of the ushers opened his light eyes, which still had an astonished look, and in whose depths shone that half-scornful light which always underlies the provincial gaze.

"Very well, very well : I will return."

And he did return. But for his high gaiters, and tambourine worn in a strap, one might have taken him for a clerk of the house : his arrival was so regular, although more difficult every morning.

Nothing now but the sight of the high-arched door made his heart beat. At the end of the arch was the ancient hotel Augereau, with its vast courtyard, where wood was already piled up for the winter. Its two pairs of stairs were hard to ascend under the mocking looks of the rabble ; and the silver chains of the ushers, the caps with braid trimmings, and the infinite accessories of the majestic apparel which separated him from his protector, increased his distress. But he dreaded still more the scenes at home, — Audiberte's terrible frowns, which made him return in despair.

Finally the *concierge* took pity, and advised him, if he wished to see the minister, to wait for him at the St. Lazare station when he started for Versailles. He went there, and placed himself among a party in the large hall on the first story, that was full of life and bustle at the hour of the arrival of the parliamentary trains. Deputies, senators, ministers, journalists, the Left, the Right, and all parties, were elbowing each other, and formed a company as variegated and numerous as the blue, green, and red placards which covered the walls. People shouted, whispered, and watched each other; one stepping aside to meditate on his coming speech, while another — the lobby orator — made the window-panes rattle with the ringing of a voice which never was to be heard in the Chamber. One observed the Northern and Southern accents, various opinions and temperaments, busy plotting of ambition and intrigue, and the noisy tread of an excited crowd among whom politics was quite in place in the suspense of waiting and the flurry of starting to travel at a fixed hour, when a whistle would hurry one on to a long line of rails covered with wheels and locomotives, and move him over ground from which might come unexpected surprises and accidents.

At the end of five minutes Valmajour saw Numa Roumestan arriving on the arm of a secretary laden with his portfolio, his overcoat thrown wide open, and his face beaming, just as he appeared the first day on the platform of the amphitheatre; and he recognized from a distance his voice, kind words, and protestations of friendship: "Count upon it. Trust yourself to me. It is as if you had. . . ."

The minister was then in the honey-moon of power. Outside of political hostilities, which were often less

violent in parliament than one might believe, and the rivalry between fine speakers, and the quarrels of lawyers defending opposite causes, he had no enemies, not having had time during three weeks in office to weary applicants. They also trusted him. Two or three were just beginning to grow impatient, and watch him on the way. To these he called out in a very loud voice as he hurried his steps, "Good-day, friend!" which forestalled reproaches, and at the same time refuted them; and by a familiar manner he kept claims at a distance, and left beggars disappointed and flattered. This "Good-day, friend," was a happy thought suggested by his thoroughly instinctive duplicity.

At the sight of the musician, who came dancing up to him with his smiling lips parted over his white teeth, Numa had a strong desire to hurl out his defeating "Good-day;" but how could he treat as a friend this rustic in a small felt hat and a gray jacket from which his hands stood out as dark as in a village photograph? He preferred to put on his "ministerial air," and pass stiffly by, leaving the poor devil amazed, annihilated, and jostled by the crowd that pressed behind the great man. Valmajour re-appeared, however, the next day and the days following, without daring to approach him, but seated himself on the edge of a bench with a sad, resigned face, such as one sees at stations among soldiers or emigrants ready for all chances of an adverse destiny. Roumestan could not avoid this silent apparition always in his path. It was in vain that he feigned not to see it, and turned away his eyes, and talked louder as he passed: the smile of his victim was there, and remained there until the departure of the train. Certainly he would have preferred a rude objection, a scene with shouting, in which officers would intervene, and which would have freed him. He went to

another station, and sometimes along the left bank, to drive away this figure of remorse. Thus in the loftiest existences there are trifles which are as annoying as gravel in a pair of seven-leagued boots.

Valmajour was not discouraged.

"It is because he is ill nowadays," he said to himself; and he obstinately returned to his post. At home his sister was nervously watching for his return.

"*Eh! bô*, have you seen the minister! Did he sign the paper?"

What exasperated her more than the eternal, "No, not yet," was the coolness of her brother, who threw down the box in a corner, as the strap cut his shoulder. His indifference arose from indolence and carelessness,—as often met with in Southern natures as vivacity. Then the strange little creature became furious. What was in his veins? Would it not come to an end? "Beware, if I were to mix myself up in it!" Being very calm himself, he let the storm pass by, drew from their case the flute and ivory-headed wand, and rubbed them with a bit of wool to remove the effects of dampness, and, while polishing them, promised to make a better attempt the next day, and to try at the ministry, and, if Roumestan was not there, to ask to see his lady.

"Ah, *vaï*, his lady! You know very well that she does not love your music. If it were the young lady,—yes, the young lady," she said, moving her head significantly.

"The lady and young lady are making sport of you," said the elder Valmajour, crouching before a turf-fire which his daughter was economically covering with ashes, which was always a subject of quarrel between them. At heart, through professional jealousy, the old man was

not sorry for his son's lack of success. As all these complications and this great change in his mode of life pleased his Bohemian and minstrel tastes, he at first rejoiced at the journey, and at the idea of seeing Paris, "the paradise of women, and purgatory of horses," as the wagoners say; for he pictured houris in light veils, and rearing horses prancing about in the midst of flames. On arriving he found cold, privation, and rain. Through fear of Audiberte, and respect for the minister, he resigned himself to shiver in his corner, grumbling, and slipping a word in now and then, with a twitching of his eyes; but the defection of Roumestan, and the anger of his daughter, opened for him also the way for recrimination. He revenged himself for all the wounded pride with which his boy's success had tortured him for ten years, and shrugged his shoulders as he listened to the flute.

"Music, indeed! That will not be of much use to you."

And he asked aloud if it were not a pity that a man of his age should have been brought so far in that Sibérille to be left to die of cold and want? And he invoked the memory of his poor sainted wife, whom he had, however, caused to die of sorrow, — "*fait devenir chèvre, allons!*" according to Audiberte's expression, — and remained for hours groaning, with his face red and grimacing, in the fireplace, so that his daughter became weary of his lamentations, and rid herself of him with two or three sous for a glass of unfermented wine at the wine-merchant's. There his despair suddenly became appeased. It did him good to sit around the roaring stove; and the old clown with a large nose and small mouth on a small, thin, and crooked body, became animated and warmed, and

recovered his fondness for the ludicrous, as a performer in Italian comedy. He amused the audience with his Gascon accent and boasts, and cursed his son's tambourine, which was such a bore in the hotel: for Valmajour, kept in breath by the attempt at his *début*, practised his instrument into the middle of the night; and the neighbors complained of the sharp trills of the little flute, and the continual buzzing with which the tambourine made the staircase tremble as if there were a revolving tower on the fifth story.

"Keep on," said Audiberte to her brother, when the proprietor of the hotel complained. Nothing more than to be told that one had no right to practise music was wanting in the way of disagreeable experiences in this Paris where one could not sleep a wink for the racket. But Valmajour played all the same. The family were sent away, however; and to leave this passage of the Saumon, which was celebrated in Aps, and which recalled their country, seemed to them worse exile, and to be going up farther into the North. On the evening of their departure, Audiberte, after the daily and fruitless trips of the tambourinist, made her men eat in haste, and did not herself speak throughout the breakfast, but sat with glittering eyes, and the determined air of having made a resolve. When the meal was over, she left to them the care of clearing the table, and threw over her shoulders her long rusty mantle.

"It will soon be two months since we came to Paris," she said with clinched teeth. "We have had enough of it. I am going myself to this minister to speak regarding it."

She adjusted the ribbon of her peculiar little head-dress, which moved about like an ear-cap, on the top of

her wavy hair, and suddenly left the room, her well-waxed heels turning up her thick woollen dress at every step. Father and son looked at each other in fear, without trying to restrain her, knowing well that they would only exasperate her in her anger; and they passed an afternoon in a *tête-à-tête*, exchanging hardly three words, while the rain streamed down on the glass; one of them polishing his bow and flute, and the other cooking the stew over a fire which he made as hot as possible to warm himself once for all during the long absence of Audiberte. Finally her hurried step, the mincing one of an under-sized person, was heard in the corridor. She entered with a beaming face.

"It is a pity that the window does not look on the street," she said, throwing off her cloak, on which there was not a drop of rain. "You might have seen below the handsome carriage which has brought me."

"A carriage? You are joking."

"And servants and livery. That will make talk in the hotel."

Then, in the midst of their admiring silence, she related her expedition, with mimicry. In the first place, instead of asking after the minister, who would never have received her, she obtained the address by speaking politely. One can have all that one wishes of the sister, the tall young lady who had come with him to Valmajour. She did not remain at the ministry, but with her relations, in a locality of small, badly-paved streets, with odors from the apothecary-shop that reminded Audiberte of the country. It was far away, and she was obliged to walk. Finally she found the house, in a place where there were arcades, like those around the little

place in Aps. How well the kind young lady received her, without the least pride, although there was an appearance of wealth at her house, beautiful gilding in the room, and silk curtains caught up this way and that, in every direction !

"So you have said farewell : you have come to Paris. Where did you come from ? How long have you been here ?" were the questions the young lady asked. And, when she learned how Numa made them move about, she immediately rang for her governess, a lady who also wore a hat, and all three started for the ministry.

You should have seen the devoted manner and bowing to the ground of all those old beadles, who ran to meet them and open the doors !

"Then you saw the minister ?" timidly asked Valmajour, while she was recovering her breath.

"Of course I did. He was very polite, I assure you. Poor *bédigas*, didn't I tell you that you must get the young lady into your hands ? She was the one who quickly arranged matters, and without an objection. In a week there will be a great musical *fête* at the ministry, to show you to the directors. And immediately afterwards, *cra-cra*, the paper and signature will come."

The best of it was, that the young lady had just driven her down there in the minister's carriage.

"And how she longed to come up here !" added the young woman from the provinces, winking at her father, and contorting her pretty face with a significant grimace. The whole face and skin of the old man, that was seamed like a dried fig, contracted as he said, "Understood — not a word." But he no longer cursed the tambourine.

Valmajour himself, who was very calm, did not catch

the sly remark of his sister. He thought only of his approaching *début*; and, taking down his box, he began to play over his airs, to send as an adieu from one end to the other of the passage, clusters of trills to florid measures.

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CHAPTER VIII.

RENEWAL OF YOUTH.

THE minister and his wife were finishing breakfast in their dining-room on the first story, a pompous and very spacious room, from which the chill was not removed by the thick hangings, the furnaces that warmed the hotel, or the smoking fumes of an abundant repast. This morning, by chance, they were alone. On the tablecloth, with the dessert, — that was always well supplied at the Southerner's table, — there was his box of cigars, the cup of vervain, which is the tea of the provincial, and large boxes with rows of cards of every color, on which were inscribed the names of senators, deputies, rectors, professors, academicians, and society men, the ordinary and extraordinary frequenters of ministerial *soirées*. Some cards were placed higher in the box than others, for privileged guests, and conferred for the first series of small concerts. Mme. Roumestan turned them over, pausing at certain names, being watched out of the corner of the eye by Numa, who, while choosing his after-breakfast cigar, discovered on her calm face a look of disapprobation and censure at the rather hazardous manner in which these first invitations were given.

But Rosalie asked no questions. All these preparations were very indifferent to her. Since their installation at the ministry, she felt even more apart from her husband, being separated by incessant obligations, by a

too numerous household, and a life so broad that intimacy was destroyed. To these was added the constant regret of having no children, and of not hearing around her little tireless feet, and the pleasant shrill and ringing laughter, which would have removed from their dining-room the glacial appearance of a hotel-table where they were sitting for a while, with a lack of individuality in the linen, furniture, silver, and all the sumptuous furnishing of a public place.

In the embarrassed silence of this closing repast came stifled sounds and bursts of harmony, to which the hammering on the curtain and platform, that was being nailed below for the concert, kept time while the musicians were rehearsing together their pieces for the concert. The door opened, and the head of the cabinet entered with papers in his hand.

"More demands!"

Roumestan became excited. "No, indeed! it would need the Pope, for there was no longer a place to give." Mcjean, without being disturbed, placed before him a package of letters, cards, and perfumed notes.

"It is very hard to refuse. You promised."

"Indeed, I have never spoken to any one."

"See: '*My dear minister*, — I have come to remind you of your word.' And this: '*The general told me that you had the kindness to offer him*.' And again: '*Remind the minister of his promise*.'"

"I am a somnambulist, then," said Roumestan amazed.

The truth is, that the *fête* was hardly decided upon when he said to the people whom he met at the Chamber and Senate, "You know I count on you for the tenth." And as he added, "quite unceremonious," one would not be likely to forget the flattering invitation.

Annoyed at being convicted of default before his wife, he turned upon her as always in such a case.

"It is your sister with her tambourinist ! Great need I had of all this tinkling. I did not expect to begin our concerts until later, but that little girl was so impatient ! 'No, no ! at once !' she begged. And you were as eager as she. *L'asé mē fiche*, if this tambourine has not turned your head."

"Oh, no ! not mine," said Rosalie, smiling. "I am afraid that this exotic music may not be understood by the Parisians. It would be necessary to bring with it the horizons of Provence, the costumes and *farandoles* ; but before all," and her voice became serious, "it is important to keep a promise."

"A promise, a promise ?" repeated Numa ; "one will soon be no longer able to say a word." And turning to his secretary, for he really needed to tease some one, he said, "*Pardi*, my dear fellow, all Southerners are not like you, — cold and moderate, and sparing of their words. You are not a true Southerner : you are a renegade, a *Franciot* as we say. A Southerner, indeed ! A man who has never lied, and who does not like vervain !" he added with comical indignation.

"Not so *franciot* as I seem to be, *M. le ministre*," replied Méjean, still very calm. "On my arrival in Paris twenty years ago, I suffered terribly from the native peculiarities which I possess, — the assurance, accent, and gestures. I was as talkative and inventive as" —

"As Bompard," whispered Roumestan, who, though he did not like any one to mock at the friend of his heart, did not himself refrain.

"Yes, upon my faith, almost as much so as Bompard : an instinct urged me never to say a true word. One

morning I was overcome with shame, and tried to correct myself. One can succeed in repressing the outward expression of exaggeration by lowering the voice, and holding in the elbows. But with one's inner self, which boils over, and will find vent, it is different. Then I made a heroic decision. Every time that I caught myself near the truth, it was a warning to speak no more that day lest I departed from it: that is how I have been able to reform my nature. But the instinct is there all the same, underlying my silence and coldness. Sometimes I happen to stop short in the middle of a sentence. It is not because a word fails me — on the contrary! I restrain myself because I feel that I am going to lie."

"Terrible South! There is no way of escaping it," said the good Numa, sending the smoke of his cigar up to the ceiling with philosophical resignation. "As for me, it is through the mania of promising, and the madness that I have for throwing myself in the face of people, and for wishing them happiness in spite of themselves, that it has a hold upon me."

The usher interrupted him, calling out from the threshold in a knowing, confidential way, "M. Béchut has arrived."

The minister suddenly showed ill humor. "I am breakfasting: do not disturb me."

The usher asked pardon; M. Béchut pretended that it was his excellency. Roumestan softened.

"Well, well, I will come. Let them wait in my study."

"Why, no," said Méjean. "Your study is filled. The Superior Council — you certainly know. You are the one who appointed the hour."

"Then at M. de Lappara's."

"I have taken the Bishop of Tulle there," timidly observed the usher, "as you told me."

There were people everywhere, solicitors whom he told in confidence to come at that hour, that they might be sure to see him; and the majority were men of mark, whom one should not keep waiting with ordinary persons.

"Take my little *salon*. I am going out," said Rosalie, rising.

And, while the usher and secretary were going to seat or to keep the guests patient, the minister quickly swallowed his vervain, and scalded himself while repeating, "I am overwhelmed! overwhelmed!"

"What more does that gloomy Béchut wish?" asked Rosalie, lowering her voice by instinct in the full house, where there was a stranger behind every door.

"What does he wish? His position, *à*. It is Dansaert's shark. He expects him to be thrown overboard to him to be devoured."

She quickly approached him.

"Is M. Dansaert to leave the ministry?"

"Do you know him?"

"My father has often spoken of him to me. He is a compatriot, a friend of his childhood. He thinks he is an honest man with a powerful mind."

Roumestan stammered out several reasons, — bad tendencies, Voltairian, he would enter on reforms; and, besides, he was very old.

"And you replace him by Béchut?"

"Oh! I know that the poor man has not the gift of pleasing the ladies."

She gave him a beautiful smile of disdain.

"For his impertinence I care as little as for his homage. What I cannot pardon in him are his clerical grimaces, his intentional display. I respect every conviction and every

belief. But if there is in this world one ugly thing which should be hated, Numa, it is falsehood and hypocrisy."

In spite of herself her voice was raised, and became warm and eloquent; and her rather cold face beamed with honesty and rectitude and a rosy glow of generous indignation.

"Hush! hush!" said Roumestan, pointing to the door. No doubt he agreed that it was not very just: this old Dansaert rendered great services. But what could he do? He had given his word.

"Take it back," said Rosalie. "Come, Numa, for my sake, I beg you."

It was a tender command, supported by the pressure of a little hand on his shoulder. He felt moved. For a long time his wife seemed to have little interest in his life, showing only a silent indulgence when he confided to her his constantly changing projects; and this prayer flattered him.

"Can any one resist you, my dear?" And the kiss that he pressed on the tips of her fingers went shuddering up beneath her narrow lace sleeve. She had very pretty arms. He suffered, however, from the necessity of saying to any one's face any thing so disagreeable, and rose with a great effort.

"I am here listening," she said, threatening him with a pretty gesture.

He passed into the small adjoining *salon*, leaving the door partly open to give her courage, and that she might hear him. The beginning was decided and energetic.

"I am in despair, my dear Béchut. What I wished to do for you is not possible."

Of the learned man's answers she caught only the tearful, supplicating intonation, broken with loud breathing through his flat nose.

But, to Rosalie's great astonishment, Roumestan did not yield, and continued to defend Dansaert with a conviction surprising in a man to whom arguments had just been suggested. Certainly it cost him something to break his promise ; but was not all this better than to commit an injustice ? This was expressing the thought of his wife, modulated by musical intonation and powerful gestures which blew in the curtains.

" Besides," he added, suddenly changing his tone, " I understand how to pity you for this little misunderstanding."

" Ah, *mon Dieu !*" said Rosalie in a low voice. Immediately there was a hail-storm of astonishing promises, the commander's cross for the first of next January, the first vacant place in the superior council, the — the — The gentleman tried to protest for form's sake ; but Numa said, —

" Be quiet ! be quiet ! It is an act of justice. Men like you are too rare."

Carried away by benevolence, and stammering with affectionate impulses, if Béchut had not gone the minister would positively have offered his portfolio to him. At the door he reminded him again : —

" I count on you Sunday, my dear master. I am to begin a series of small concerts among friends, you know. Very select."

And returning to Rosalie, he said, " Well, what do you say about it ? I hope that I have yielded nothing to him."

It was so droll that she received him with a great burst of laughter. When he knew the reason, and all the new promises that he had just made, he seemed frightened.

" Well, they will be pleased with you all the same," she said, and left him, giving him the smile of former days ;

quite light-hearted at her good action, and perhaps also happy at feeling something stir in her heart that she had long thought dead.

"Angel, go," said Roumestan, who looked at her as she left the room with a tender light in his eyes; and, when Méjean returned to notify him regarding the council, he said, —

"Understand, my friend, when one has the happiness to possess such a wife, marriage is a paradise on earth. Make haste and marry."

Méjean shook his head without answering.

"What! is not your suit prospering?"

"I fear not. Mme. Roumestan promised me to question her sister; and as she no longer talks to me about any thing" —

"Do you wish me to undertake it? I am on wonderfully good terms with my little sister-in-law. I wager that I shall accomplish it."

There remained a little vervain in the teapot; and, while pouring out a fresh cup, Roumestan lavished praises on his chief of the cabinet. He had lost nothing of his grandeur. Méjean was still his excellent and best friend, and between Méjean and Rosalie he felt himself stronger and more himself.

"Ah, my dear fellow! that woman! that woman! If you knew how kind and forgiving she has been! When I think that I might have" — To withhold the confidence that came to his lips with a deep sigh really cost him great effort. "If I did not love her I should be very guilty."

Baron de Lappara just then entered very quickly, mysteriously announcing, "Mlle. Bachellery is here."

Immediately Numa's face colored deeply, and a bright

gleam in his eyes dried the dewy light that rose in them.

"Where is she? At your house?"

"Monseigneur Lipmann is already there," said Lapara, ridiculing the idea of a possible encounter. "I have taken her down-stairs to the grand *salon*. The rehearsal is over."

"Well, I will go down."

"Do not forget the council," Méjean tried to say. But Roumestan, without listening, sprang down the small, break-neck staircase that led to the minister's private apartments on the reception-room floor.

Since the history of Mme. d'Esparbès was made known, he had always avoided binding *liaisons*, those of the heart or vanity, that might have destroyed his household forever. He was certainly not a model husband; but the contract, riddled with holes, still held. Rosalie, although warned once, was too straightforward and too honest for jealous watchfulness, and, though always anxious, never had proofs. At this hour, even, if he could have suspected the place that this new caprice was to hold in his life, he would have hastened to ascend the stairway more quickly than he descended it; but our destiny always delights in deceiving us by approaching us in a mantle and mask, and in increasing by mystery the charm of first interviews. How could Numa mistrust this little girl, whom from his carriage, several days before, he had seen crossing the court of the hotel, taking little leaps over the wet places, with her skirt gathered up in one hand, and holding high her umbrella in the other in a truly Parisian street style? Large eyebrows curved down over an arched nose, a fair head of hair fastened in the back in the American style, which the

dampness curled at the end, a full leg delicately poised on high heels, were all that he noticed ; and in the evening he asked Lappara without attaching more importance to it : —

“ Shall we wager that the little creature I met this morning in the court-yard was coming to your house ? ”

“ Yes, sir : she was coming to my house, but to see you,” and he gave the name of the little Bachellery.

“ What ! the *débutante* at the Bouffes ? What is her age ? Why, she is a child ! ”

The papers said a great deal that winter about this Alice Bachellery, whom the caprice of a fashionable *maître* sought out in a small provincial theatre, and whom all Paris wished to hear sing the song “ Petit Mitron,” whose refrain she gave with irresistible vulgar playfulness : —

“ Chaud ! Chaud ! Les p’tits pains d’grau ! ”

She was one of those *divas* that the boulevard makes use of by the half-dozen every season, and might be compared to a bit of glory in paper filled with gas and advertising, like the small pink balloons that last for a day in the sunlight and dust of public gardens. Could any one imagine that she came to ask of the minister the favor of figuring on the programme of the first concert ? Little Bachellery in the Public Instruction ! It was such an amusing and wild idea, that Numa wished to hear her ask it herself ; and in a ministerial letter which had a favorable tone gave her to understand that he would receive her the next day. The next day Mlle. Bachellery did not come.

“ She must have changed her mind,” said Lappara. “ She is such a child.”

The minister was piqued, spoke no more of her for two days, and on the third sent for her.

She was now waiting in the red-and-gold *salon des fêtes*, which was so imposing with its lofty windows on a level with the bare garden. It contained Gobelin hangings, and a marble statue of the great Molière in a sitting posture and dreaming in the background. A Pleyel and a few desks for rehearsals filled hardly a corner of the vast hall, whose chilling resemblance to a deserted museum would have impressed any other than the little Bachellery; but she was such a child! Tempted by the broad, shining waxed floor, she amused herself, wrapped up in her furs, with her arms in her very small muff, and her nose held up in the air from under her cap, by sliding from one end to the other like a *coryphée*, dancing the "ballet on ice" in "The Prophet."

Roumestan surprised her in this exercise.

"Ah! *M. le ministre!*" she exclaimed, abashed, out of breath, and with trembling lashes. He had entered with head erect, and a grave step, to remove whatever there might be out of place in the interview, and to give a lesson to this errand-girl who made Excellencies pose. But he was immediately disarmed. How could it be otherwise? She explained her little business so well, and the ambitious desire that had come to her all at once to take part in this concert which was so much talked about, and which was an opportunity for her to make herself heard elsewhere than in the wearisome opera and comic performances. When she thought it all over, she had stage-fright.

"Oh, yes, a real stage-fright! wasn't it, mamma?"

Roumestan then noticed a stout lady in a velvet mantle, and hat with feathers, who walked forward from the end of the *salon*, and bowed three times. Mme. Bachellery the mother, an ancient Dugazon of *cafés-concerts*,

with a Bordelais accent, and the small nose of her daughter swallowed up in a broad oyster-woman's face, was one of those dreadful mammas who show themselves at the side of their daughters like a prophecy of the future decay of beauty. But Numa was not in the mood for philosophic study, captivated by the youthful, careless grace of her lovely person, and the theatre-slang that accompanied her ingenuous laugh, — a laugh of sixteen years, so the ladies said.

"Sixteen ! Why, at what age, then, did she enter the theatre ?"

"She was born there, *M. le ministre*. Her father, who has now retired, was a director of the Folies-Bordelaises."

"What ! a child of the profession ?" said Alice fretfully, showing thirty-two sparkling teeth in a straight, close line, as if on parade.

"Alice, you forget yourself before his Excellency."

"Do not reprove her. She is a child."

He made her sit near him on the lounge, with a kindly, almost paternal gesture, and complimented her on her ambition, and taste for high art, and her desire to escape the easy and disastrous success of the opera, only it required much work and close study.

"Oh ! as for that," said the little girl, waving her roll of music, "two hours every day with Vauters."

"Vauters. Perfect ! Excellent method ;" and he opened the roll like a connoisseur.

"And what are we singing ? Ah ! the waltz of Mireille. The song of Magali ! Why, it is my native air."

Then keeping time with his head, and partly closing his eyes, he began to whistle : —

"O Magali, ma bien aimée,
Fuyons tous deux sous la ramée,
Au fond du bois silencieux."

She continued, —

“La nuit sur nous étend ses voiles,
Et tes beaux yeux” —

And Roumestan at the top of his voice concluded, —

“Vont faire pâlir les étoiles.”

She interrupted him quickly : —

“Wait a moment ! Mamma will play the accompaniment.”

And pushing the desks aside, and opening the piano, she placed her mother before it by force. Ah ! a little determined person ! The minister hesitated a second, with his finger on the page of the duet. What if some one should hear them ! Bah ! for three days they had been rehearsing every day in the grand *salon*. And they began.

Both standing and looking over the same page of music followed the accompaniment of Mme. Bachellery, who played from memory. Their two foreheads were close together, and almost touched, and their breath mingled with the modulated caresses of the rhythm ; and Numa, becoming impassioned, sang with expression, and held out his arms, when he came to the high notes, in order to bring them out better. For some years since the assumption of his grand political *rôle*, he had talked more than he practised scales, and his voice was as rusty and heavy as his person ; but he still took great pleasure in singing, especially with this child.

For example, he had completely forgotten the Bishop of Tulle, and the Superior Council, who were wasting their time sitting around the large green table. Once or twice the clicking of a silver chain announced the appearance of the wan face of the usher, who immediately

drew back frightened at having seen the Minister of the Public Instruction and Culture singing a duet with an actress of a small theatre. Numa was a minister no longer: he was Vincent the basket-maker, pursuing the impregnable Magali in her coquettish transformations.

How charming she was as she fled, and concealed herself with her childlike cunning, her brilliant laugh ringing out between her pearly teeth! and how charming when, conquered, she gave herself up, and leaned her foolish little head, dizzy with running, on her friend's shoulder!

Mamma Bachellery broke the charm by turning around as soon as the piece was finished, exclaiming, —

“What a voice, *M. le ministre*! what a voice!”

“Yes, I sang in my youth,” he answered foolishly.

“But you still sing *magnificently*. Hein, Baby, how different from M. de Lappara!”

Baby rolled round her music, and lightly raised her shoulders, as if so indisputable a truth needed no other answer. Roumestan asked rather anxiously, —

“But M. de Lappara?”

“Yes, he sometimes comes to partake of *bouillabaisse* with us; then after dinner Baby and he sing their duet.”

At this moment the usher, no longer hearing music, decided to return with the precaution of a tamer of wild beasts in their cage.

“I am coming, I am coming,” said Roumestan; and addressing the little girl with his most ministerial air, to make her feel the hierarchical distance that separated her from his *attaché*, he said, —

“I present you my compliments, mademoiselle: you have a great deal of talent; and, if it pleases you to sing here Sunday, I willingly grant you the favor.”

She gave a childish cry. "Really? Oh, how lovely!" and with one leap sprang on his neck.

"Alice, Alice! What are you doing?" said the mother. But she was already far away, running through the *salons*, where she seemed very small in the high suite of rooms—a child, quite a child.

Numa was stirred by this caress, and waited a moment before ascending. Before him in the rusty garden a pale sunbeam fell on the lawn, warming and giving life to winter; and he felt penetrated to the heart with similar warmth, as if this lively supple form, in brushing past, had communicated to him a little of her springtime warmth. "Ah! beautiful is youth." Mechanically he looked at himself in a mirror, and was more thoughtful than he had been for years. What changes, *boun Diou!* He had grown very stout on account of a sedentary profession, and the carriages that he abused. His complexion was dulled by late hours, and his hair was already thin and gray about the temples: he was still more frightened at the width of his cheeks, and a broad space between his nose and ear.

"What if I should let my beard grow to conceal it?" Yes; but it would come out white, and he was not forty-five. Ah! politics makes one grow old.

For a moment he experienced the frightful sadness of a woman who sees that all her charms have gone, and that she is unable to inspire love, though she can still feel it. His reddened eyelids were swollen; and, in this palace of power, this bitterness that was profoundly human, and in which ambition counted as nought, had something even more cutting; but on account of his quickly changing impressions he immediately consoled himself, thinking of his glory, his talent, and lofty situation. Were not

these equal to beauty and youth for making one's self beloved?

He found himself growing very stupid, drove away his chagrin with a shrug of his shoulder, and went up to dismiss the council, for there was no longer time to preside over it.

"What is the matter with you to-day, my dear minister? You appear quite rejuvenated."

More than a dozen times in the course of the day they paid him this compliment on account of his good-humor and his animation, that was particularly noticed in the lobbies of the Chamber, where he caught himself whistling, "*O Magali, my well-beloved!*" Seated on the minister's bench, he listened with a very flattering attention to an interminable discourse of the orator on the tariff, and smiled beatifically with eyelids cast down. And the Left, whom his reputation for astuteness frightened, said to themselves with a shudder, "Let us be watchful. Roumestan is preparing something." It was simply on account of the figure of the little Bachellery, whom his imagination took pleasure in calling before him in the dulness of the buzzing discourse, and promenading before the ministerial bench, in all her attractions, — her hair covering her forehead with a line of light blonde frizz, her complexion like pink hawthorn, giving her the appearance of a dashing girl, with the maturity of a woman.

However, towards evening he had another sad mood when returning from Versailles with some of his colleagues in the cabinet. In the stifling air of a car full of smokers, they talked, in the tone of familiar gayety which Roumestan carried with him everywhere, of a certain orange-colored velvet hat framing a pale creole

face at the diplomatic tribune, where it made a happy diversion from the custom-house tariffs, and made all the honorables hold their noses up in the air, like a class of school-boys when a stray butterfly fluttering by interrupts a lesson in Greek. No one knew who she was.

"You must inquire of the general," said Numa, gayly turning to the Marquis d'Espaillion d'Aubord, a minister of war, and an old love-sick graybeard.

"Good! Do not defend yourself, she has looked at no one but you."

The general made a grimace which drew up to his nose, as if by a spring, his thin yellow goat's beard.

"It's many a day since women have looked at me. They have eyes only for those *b*—— there."

He whom he designated in this rakish language peculiarly dear to all gentlemen-soldiers, was the young de Lappara, who was seated in a corner of the car, with the ministerial portfolio on his knees, and preserved a respectful silence in the company of big caps. Roumestan felt hit, without precisely knowing where, and replied with vivacity. According to him, there were many other attractions than youth in a man that women preferred.

"They tell you so."

"I leave it to these gentlemen."

These gentlemen, ministers and sub-secretaries of state, — either corpulent, with coats that bound them tightly across the stomach, or withered and slender, bald or white-haired, and toothless, with ill-kept mouths, and afflicted with some ailment, — were each and all of Roumestan's opinion. The discussion became animated in the noise of the wheels, and the loud conversation of the parliamentary train.

"Our ministers are quarrelling," said people in the

neighboring compartments ; and the journalists tried to catch a few words through the partitions.

"The popular man, the man in power," thundered Numa, "is the one they like. To be able to say that the man who is there before them, at their knees, is an illustrious and powerful man, one of the levers of the world, is what delights them."

"*Hé*, exactly !"

"Very true, very true."

"I think as you do, my dear colleague."

"Well, I tell you that when I was a staff-officer, a simple lieutenant, and on my Sundays off started out in grand style, in accordance with my twenty-five years and with new shoulder-knots, I received as I passed along those looks from women which envelop one like the lash of a whip from neck to heels, — looks that no one gives to a big-epauletted fellow of my age. So now, when I wish to feel the warmth and sincerity of one of those glances, a silent declaration in the open street, do you know what I do? I take one of my *aides-de-camp* who is young, by the tooth and shirt-front, and I pay him for walking with him arm-in-arm, *s—— n—— d—— D——!*"

Roumestan remained silent until he reached Paris, his melancholy of the morning returning, with the addition of anger and indignation against the blind folly of women who can go crazy over fools and would-be beaux. Let us see what there is rare about this Lappara. Without mingling in the debate, he caressed his blonde beard with a foppish manner, which was increased by his precise dress and low-cut collar. Had he been at the theatre, he would have been applauded by the *claque*. Such an air he would assume, were he to sing the duet of "Mireille" with the little Bachellery, — his mistress, of course. The

idea shocked Numa ; but, at the same time, he would like to ascertain this, that he might convince himself.

Hardly were they alone, while his *coupé* was rolling towards the ministry, than he rudely asked without looking at Lappara, —

“Have you known these women long?”

“What women, monsieur?”

“Why, the Bachellery ladies, to be sure.”

His head was full of them. He thought that all, like himself, were thinking of them. Lappara began to laugh.

Oh, yes ! for a long while : they were countrywomen of his. The Bachellery family ! the Folies-Bordelaise ! all the pleasant memories of his eighteen years were recalled. His schoolboy heart had beaten for the mamma in a manner to have sent flying all the buttons on his jacket.

“And to-day it beats for the daughter?” asked Roumestan in a light tone, wiping the glass pane with his glove, in order to look out into the dark, wet street.

“Oh ! the daughter is another person, notwithstanding she is a very reserved and serious young lady. I do not know what she is aiming at, but it is something that I am not in a position to give her.”

Numa felt relieved.

“Ah, indeed ! and yet you are going back there.”

“Why, yes : the home of the Bachellerys is so entertaining. The father, the ancient director, writes comic couplets for *cafés-concerts*. The mamma sings and acts them, while frying *côtes* in oil ; and the *bouillabaisse* is such as Roubion himself does not have. There is shouting, confusion, music, and feasting, with the Folies-Bordelaises at home. The little Bachellery leads the rollicking, twirling round, supping and trilling, but does not lose her head an instant.”

"Eh! my fine fellow, you expect that she will lose it some day or another, and to your profit too." Having suddenly become very grave, the minister added, "It is bad society for you, young man. You must be more sedate than that, devil take it! The Bordelaise folly cannot last all your life."

And, taking his hand, he continued, "Aren't you thinking of marriage, pray?"

"No, indeed, monsieur. I am very well off as I am: that is, unless I have an astonishing windfall."

"With your name, your relations, the windfall will come;" and, suddenly stepping into his carriage, he added, —

"What would you say to Mlle. Le Quesnoy?"

The Bordelais, in spite of his audacity, paled with joy and astonishment.

"Oh! sir, I never should have dared."

"Why not? why, yes, yes. You know how I love you, my dear boy. I should be happy to see you in my family. I should feel more complete, more" —

He stopped short in the middle of his sentence, being reminded that he had already said it to Méjean in the morning.

"Ah! bad luck. It is done." He shrugged his shoulders, and shrank back in the carriage. After all, Hortense is free, and will make her own choice. I shall still have taken this youth from bad society." On his conscience, Roumestan was sure that this sentiment alone had influenced him.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING AT THE MINISTRY.

THE Faubourg St. Germain appeared different this evening. The dwellers in narrow and usually quiet streets, who retired early, were awakened by the jolting of omnibuses off of their route ; there were others, on the contrary, where people were accustomed to the sound of the steady stream of travel and to the incessant rumble of the great Parisian arteries, which now opened before one like the empty bed of a river, and appeared wider because silent and deserted. At their entrance they were guarded by a tall mounted policeman, or by a line of officers who cast gloomy shadows across the asphaltum, and who, with their hoods drawn down and their hands in their muffs, motioned to carriages, —

“No passing here.”

“Is there a fire?” some one asked, putting a scared face out of a coach-door.

“No, sir : there is a *soirée* at the Public Instruction.”

The man addressed returned to his post ; while the coachman drove away, swearing at being obliged to make a long circuit on the left bank, where the streets, cut through irregularly, have still somewhat of the crookedness of old Paris. It was true that at a distance the brilliant lights on both sides of the minister's house, the fires burning in the middle of the street to drive away the cold, and the long line of light of the carriages winding slowly

around to the same point, cast over the neighborhood the brilliant light of a conflagration, made brighter by the limpid blue of the heavens and the clear, frosty air.

But on approaching the house one became quickly re-assured by the orderly manner in which the *fête* was conducted. The broad, even sheet of light reached the roofs of the adjacent houses, which bore the inscriptions, in gold letters, of "Mayoralty of the VII. District. Postal and Telegraph Department," which could be read as plainly as by daylight ; then softly faded into Bengal lights, which cast a fairy-like radiance on a number of tall, bare, motionless trees.

Among the passers-by who tarried in spite of the cold, and out of curiosity formed a line at the hotel-door, there moved about a small, comical shadow, with the walk of a duck, and wrapped from head to foot in a long peasant's cloak, which concealed all her person excepting two sharp eyes. She came and went, bent almost double, her teeth chattering ; though, being carried away by feverish excitement, she did not notice the frosty air. Sometimes she hastened towards the carriages stationed along the Rue de Grenelle, that were advancing almost imperceptibly, with a luxurious sound of curb-chains and of impatient steeds, and disclosing to view behind the misty window shadowy white figures. Now and then she returned to the entrance, where the carriage of some high dignitary, having been allowed to break the line, freely entered. She pushed aside the people with a "Pardon ! Let me have a look." When the carriage-steps were noisily let down, and the glare from the lamps beneath the awnings disclosed streams of rustling satin and airy clouds of tulle and flowers gliding over the carpeting, the little shadow, eagerly leaning over, drew back just quick enough to

prevent being crushed by other carriages that were entering.

Audiberte wished to see with her own eyes how every thing went off. With what pride she looked at the crowd and lights, at the soldiers on foot and horseback, and at this quarter of Paris turned topsy-turvy on account of Valmajour's tambourine ! for it was in his honor that this *fête* was given, and she was convinced that these fine gentlemen and beautiful ladies had no other name than that of Valmajour on their lips. From the door on the Rue de Grenelle she ran to the Rue Bellechasse, through which the carriages drove away. Approaching a group of guards and coachmen in large overcoats standing around a *brasero* blazing in the middle of the street, she was astonished to hear them talk of the cold which was very keen that winter, of potatoes freezing in the cellars, and matters wholly irrelevant to the *fête* and her brother. She felt irritated more than all at the endless, unwinding line, and would have liked to see the last carriage enter, to be able to say to herself, "He is there : it has begun. This time it is sure." But the night was advancing, and the cold became more penetrating. Her feet were freezing, which made her weep, which it is difficult to do when the heart is glad. Finally she decided to return home, and gave a last look at the splendors which she carried away with her, through the deserted streets and icy night, in her poor wild head, which was feverish with dreams and hopes ; while her temples throbbed with burning ambition, and her eyes were forever dazzled and blinded by the illumination to the glory of Valmajour.

What would she have said if she had entered, and seen all the white-and-gold *salons* which opened into each other by arched doors, and were made to appear larger

by mirrors in which were reflected the light from the chandeliers and candelabra; if she had seen the glitter of diamonds, epaulettes, and orders of every kind, embroidered in palm-leaves, aigrettes, and brochettes, and as large as pyrotechnic suns, or as small as charms, and fastened around the neck by broad red ribbons that made one think of the bleeding circle on necks beheaded?

Mixed up with the great names of the Faubourg were those of ministers, generals, ambassadors, and members of the Institute and Superior Council of the University. Never in the amphitheatre at Aps, or even in the grand meeting of tambourine-players at Marseilles, had Valmajour had such an audience. His name, to tell the truth, did not occupy a very prominent place in this *fête* which was given in his honor. The programme, embellished with a wonderful border from the pen of Dalys, to be sure, announced "airs with variations on the tambourine," with the name of Valmajour among that of several illustrious lyric artists; but no one looked at the programme.

Only intimate friends, who always know one's affairs, said to the minister, who stood at the entrance of the first *salon*, —

"You have a tambourine-player?"

"Yes, it is a fancy of the ladies," he answered absently.

Poor Valmajour received but little of his attention. There was another *début* that evening, of more consequence to him. What would they say of it? Would she be successful? Had not his interest in the child deceived him as to her talent as a singer? And feeling very much in love, although he did not wish as yet to confess it, consumed to his very marrow by the passion of a man of forty, he felt the anxiety of the father, the husband, the lover, and the costumer of the *débutante*,

that mournful anxiety which troubles hearts behind the curtain on the night of a first performance. It did not prevent him from being amiable, and from receiving his company with both hands extended. What a company it was, — *boun Diou!* — with its affectation and smiles, its neighing and stamping, and postures of the body forward and backward! demonstrations which, though monotonous, varied in degree. The minister, suddenly leaving and almost repulsing the dear guest to whom he was about to yield his heart, and to promise in a low voice a multitude of invaluable favors, sprang forward to meet a stout lady with a high color and commanding gait; and, with an “Ah, marchioness!” took within his own a large red arm, squeezed into a glove with twenty buttons, and escorted the noble guest between a double row of black-coated men, who bowed respectfully from *salon* to *salon*, as far as the concert-hall, where the honors were done by Mme. Roumestan and her sister. Returning, he shook hands right and left, with the cordial words, “Count upon it. It is done,” or hurried out a “Good-day, friend,” and to give more warmth to the reception, and to put a current of sympathy between the solemn guests, presented people to each other, and, without warning, threw them into each other’s arms, saying, “What! you do not know each other? Prince d’Anhalt, M. Bos, the senator.” He did not notice that hardly were their names spoken, when the two men, after a brusque and profound bow, with a “Monsieur, monsieur,” awaited only his departure to ferociously turn their backs upon each other.

Like the majority of political combatants, the good Numa, when once a conqueror, and in power, had grown tame. Without ceasing to belong to the moral order, the

Vendean of the South had lost his fine ardor for the cause, left great hopes to slumber, and began to think that affairs were getting along. Why need there be savage hatred between honest men? He wished pacification and mutual forbearance, and counted on music to bring about a reconciliation between the parties. His "small concerts" of about fifteen became a neutral ground of artistic enjoyment and courtesy, where the most bitter opponents could meet, aside from political torments and passions, and learn to appreciate each other. On account of this there was a singular mixture in the invitations, and the guests were embarrassed and ill at ease. There was quickly-checked whispering, a noiseless moving to and fro of black coats, a lack of interest, and a raising of the eyes to the ceiling to study the gilded flutings of the panels, the ornamentation of the Directory, half in the style of Louis XVI., and half Empire, which displays copper heads inlaid in straight lines on the marble mantle-pieces. People were cold and warm at the same time, as if the bitter frost outside, though barred by thick walls and wadded curtains, had chilled the spirit. At times the hasty flitting of Roche-maure and Lappara, acting as deputies to seat the ladies, broke the monotonous promenade of those who were wearied with standing; and the appearance of beautiful Mme. Hubler caused a sensation as she passed, with plumes in her hair, and with the thin profile of a wax doll, with a smile reaching from the corner of her lips to her eyebrows, like a figure in a hair-dresser's window. But it very quickly became cold again.

"These *salons* are the devil and all to warm. The shade of Frayssinous must certainly return at night."

This remark, uttered in a loud voice, came from a

group of young musicians, who were crowding around Cardaillac, the director of the Opéra, who was philosophically sitting on a velvet bench, with his back to a bust of Molière. As he was now very stout and rather deaf, with a bristling moustache, perfectly white, and with a bloated and impenetrable mask, one hardly recognized the supple, dashing *impressario* of the *fêtes* of the nabob in the majestic idol whose eye alone told of the mocking Parisian, of his wide knowledge of life, and of his mind, which was like an iron-pointed *bâton*, hardened in the glare of the footlights. Satisfied and satiated, and fearing, above every thing, to be removed from his situation at the end of his term, he drew in his claws, and spoke little, especially here, where he was satisfied to emphasize his remarks on the official and society comedy with the silent laugh of Leatherstocking.

"Boissaric, my child," he said, in a low tone, to a young and crafty fellow from Toulouse, who had just succeeded in having a ballet performed at the Opéra, after waiting only ten years for a chance, which no one believed he had, — "Boissaric, since you know every thing, tell me the name of this solemn personage with moustaches, who talks familiarly with every one, and walks behind his nose meditatively, as if he were going to its burial. He must belong to the profession, for he has talked theatre to me with a certain degree of experience."

"I think not, patron. He is more likely a diplomat. I heard him say just now to the Minister of Belgium that they had been colleagues for a long time."

"You are mistaken, Boissaric: he must be a foreign general. He was speechifying a moment ago to a group of fellows with big epaulets, and said, in a very loud voice, —

“ ‘There never should have been a large military command.’ ”

“ Strange ! ”

Lappara, who was consulted as he passed by, began to laugh.

“ Why, it is Bompard.”

“ *Quès aco* Bompard ? ”

“ The minister’s friend. Don’t you know him ? ”

“ From the South ? ”

“ *Té, parbleu.* ”

It was indeed Bompard, who, in a new, superb, tight-fitting coat with velvet trimmings, and with his gloves tucked in his waistcoat, was trying to enliven his friend’s *soirée* by a varied and sustained conversation. Unknown in official society, where he presented himself for the first time, he seemed to create a sensation, displaying from one group to the other his inventive faculties, brilliant visions, stories of royal loves, adventures, and combats, and triumphs in federal shooting, which brought to all the faces around him the same expression of astonishment, embarrassment, and doubt. There was, to be sure, an element of gayety ; but it was understood by a few intimate friends only, and was powerless to divert the *ennui* which now reached even the concert-hall, a large and very picturesque room with two stories of galleries, and a glass ceiling which seemed to be open to the sky. Long-leaved banana and palm trees, motionless under the chandeliers, made a background of fresh greenery to the toilets of ladies sitting in a close line in countless rows of chairs. There was a sea of bowing and swaying necks, shoulders, and arms protruding from corsages like parts of a half-opened flower ; there were head-dresses dotted with stars, diamonds mingling with the bluish

light of black hair and the spun gold of fair hair ; and indistinct profiles, in full health, with curving lines from the *chignon* to the waist, or slender and delicate ones from the long neck fastened with a knot of velvet to the belt which was clasped by a small buckle of brilliants. Open fans, shaded and spangled, waved and fluttered over all, and mingled the perfume of white roses or opoponax with the faint exhalation of white lilacs and natural violets.

The weary expression of their faces increased at the prospect of keeping still two hours before the platform where the chorus, in black coats and in white muslin, passive as before a photographic apparatus, were extended in a half-circle, and where the orchestra, like instruments of torture, were concealed by foliage and roses, above which protruded the necks of bass-violists. All knew the tortures of the musical *cangue*,¹ which were reckoned among the fatigues and cruel society burdens of a winter season. That is why one in searching in the large hall found that the only satisfied, smiling face was that of Mme. Roumestan, which did not wear that professional smile of the hostess, which so easily changes to an expression of fatigue and hatred when no longer observed, but that of a happy woman beloved, and about to begin life anew. Oh, inexhaustible tenderness of an honest heart that has beaten for love only once ! Here she was beginning to believe again in her Numa, who had been so good and tender for some time. It was like a re-union, and the embrace of two hearts re-united after a long absence. Without questioning from what cause arose this renewed tenderness, she saw him again young and loving as one evening before the hunting

¹ An instrument of torture used in Asia. — TRANS.

panel ; and she was still the charming Diana with a supple, delicate figure, in a white brocade dress, with her chestnut hair in bands above her pure forehead, where dwelt no evil thought, and which seemed to be that of a woman of twenty-five rather than thirty.

Hortense also looked very pretty, in a blue tulle dress which like a cloud enveloped her tall, rather stooping figure, and lent a soft brown shade to her face. But she was absorbed in the *début* of her musician. She wondered how this refined public would enjoy this local music, and if the tambourine, as Rosalie said, ought not to have been surrounded with a gray horizon of olive-trees, and hills like lace-work ; and in silence, and full of emotion, amid the murmur of conversation, and the rustling of fans, in which mingled the successive chords from the instruments, she looked over the programme, and counted the pieces before Valmajour's turn.

After a tapping of the bow on the desks, and a rustling of paper on the platform where the chorus have risen with their parts in their hands, and a steady look of the victims toward the hall-door, which is obstructed by black coats, as if they longed to fly, the first notes of Glück's chorus rise to the glass roof above, on which rests the blue expanse of the winter night, —

“ Ah ! dans ce bois funeste et sombre,”

It has begun.

A taste for music has greatly increased in France in the last few years. At Paris especially, the Sunday concerts, and those of the Holy Week, and of a large number of private societies, have aroused public thought, made classical works generally known, and brought musical knowledge into fashion. But at heart Paris is too full of

life and excitement to be very fond of music, which is an overwhelming power, that holds one motionless and voiceless even, seizing thought as in a net of floating harmony, and, like the sea, lulls one to sleep. The Parisian passion for it is like that of a swell for a fashionable girl, for the sake of being *chic*. It is that of the gallery, and is commonplace and worthless, even to *ennui*.

Ennui! that was indeed the dominant note in this concert of the Public Instruction. Upon receiving the signalled applause and the ecstatic looks which are part of the worldly assumption of the most sincere women, it gradually became stirring, and brought a fixed smile and light to their eyes, and roused them from their pretty languishing poses as if they were birds on a branch, drinking it in drop by drop. Chained to the long rows of chairs, they one after the other discussed the music, shouting, "Bravo!" "Divine!" "Delicious!" to revive themselves as they were succumbing to a torpor which like a mist seemed to come from that sea of sound, and to render them indifferent to the artists.

The most famous and illustrious of Paris were there, however, and interpreted the classical music with all the scientific knowledge it required, and which, alas! can be acquired only at the cost of years. Here is Vauters, who has sung a beautiful romance of Beethoven, "Calm," and with more passion than ever this evening, but there are harsh notes in the instrument, sounding like the grating of a bow on the wood of a violin; and of the great singer of former days, the celebrated beauty, there remain only fine attitudes, an irreproachable method, and that long white hand which at the last bar brushes away the tear in the corner of her eye, enlarged by kohl, — a tear which tells of a sob that the voice can no longer express.

Who like the handsome Mayol has ever sighed the serenade of "Don Juan" with such light delicacy, whose passion seems like that of a dragon-fly in love? Unfortunately one hears it no longer. In vain he stands on tip-toe, and stretches his throat, and spins out the note, accompanying it with the easy gesture of the spinner pinching her wool between two fingers: not a sound is heard.

Paris, grateful for past enjoyment, applauds all the same; but these worn-out voices, and faded and too-familiar faces, like medals with the bas-reliefs worn off by constant circulation, cannot dissipate the heavy atmosphere at the minister's *fête*, notwithstanding the efforts of Roumestan to enliven it, and the bravos of enthusiasm which he utters loudly among the black coats; notwithstanding the "Hush!" with which he terrifies, at the distance of two *salons*, people who try to talk, and move about silent as spectres in the brilliant light, cautiously changing their places to divert themselves. Stooping, with their arms hanging listlessly, and with vacant and stupefied faces, they fall exhausted on low seats, and twirl their opera-hats between their legs.

The entrance of Alice Bachellery on the stage arouses every one. At both doors of the hall the people are pressing forward, curious to see the little *diva* in a short skirt standing on the platform, with her lips parted and long eyelashes quivering, as if with surprise at seeing so many present. "*Chaud! chaud! les p'tis pains de gruau!*" hummed the young men of the clubs, with the vulgar gesture given at the end of the couplet. Old gentlemen from the University approach friskily, leaning their heads forward on the side of their good ear, that they may not lose the full meaning of the coarse jest then in

fashion. It was a disappointment when the little baker's boy sang in her sharp voice a grand air from "*Alceste*," rehearsed with La Vauters, who encouraged her from the wings. Faces grow long, and the black coats desert the place, and begin to wander around, the more freely because the minister, who went to the end of the last *salon* on the arm of M. de Boë, — who was quite overcome by such an honor, — is not watching them. Eternal childishness of love ! Though you are twenty years in a palace, fifteen years in the tribune, and sufficient master of yourself to preserve, amid the most exciting sessions and rude, angry interruptions, the watchfulness and coolness of the sea-gull, that fishes when the tempest is the highest, if once you are in the power of passion you will find yourself the weakest of the weak, trembling and cowardly to the extent of hanging desperately on the arm of an imbecile rather than to hear the slightest criticism of your idol.

"Pardon, I must leave you. This is the *entr'acte*," said the minister, hurrying away, and sending back the young master of ceremonies to the obscurity which afterward he will not be likely to leave. People push forward to the buffet ; and the relieved looks of all these unfortunates, to whom motion and speech have been restored, would make Numa believe that his *protégé* had just had a great success. They throng around him, and congratulate him : "Divine !" "Delicious !" But no one speaks to him positively of what interests him ; and he finally gets hold of Cardaillac, who is passing near him, walking sideways, and pushing back the human flood with his large shoulder as a lever.

"Well, what did you think of her ?"

"Of whom, pray ?"

"The little one," said Numa, in a tone that he tried to render indifferent. The other, good at parry and thrust, understood, and without flinching said, —

"It is a revelation."

The lover blushed as at twenty, when *l'ancienne à tous* touched his foot under the table, at Malmus'.

"Then you think that at the Opéra" —

"Without doubt. But it needs a good showman," said Cardaillac, with his quiet smile; and, while the minister ran to take the good news to Mlle. Alice, the showman continued in the direction of the buffet, which stood framed by a broad glass in brown and gold wood-work, at the end of a hall. In spite of the harsh hangings, the arrogant and majestic air of the *maitres d'hôtel*, certainly chosen among the unsuccessful universities, ill-humor and *ennui* vanish before the large buffet laden with delicate crystal, fruits, and sandwiches in pyramid form, giving place — Nature re-asserting her need — to eager, voracious looks. At the smallest open space between two corsages, or two heads leaning towards a piece of salmon or the wing of a fowl on their little plate, an arm, a black sleeve, or a glittering rough epaulet, which brushes the rice-powder from fair shoulders, is extended for a glass, fork, or roll.

Under the influence of old wines, people talk and become animated, and laughter rings out. A thousand remarks cross each other, a thousand are interrupted, and answers given to questions already forgotten. In one corner little screams of indignation, "How horrible! It is frightful!" were heard around the *savant* Béchut, the enemy of women, who continued to hurl epithets on the weaker sex. Then there was a quarrel among the musicians.

"Ah! my dear fellow, take care. You are disregarding the upper fifth."

"Is it true that she is only sixteen?"

"Sixteen years in the cask, and a few years in the bottle."

"Mayol, Mayol indeed! he is played out. And to think that he gets two thousand francs every evening at the Opéra!"

"Yes; but it takes a thousand franc notes to warm his hail, and Cardaillac makes up the rest for him at cards."

"Bordeaux, chocolate, champagne."

"—to come and explain himself in the privacy of the Commission."

"—by drawing up the ruche a little with white satin shells."

Then Mlle. Le Quesnoy, who has many around her, commends her tambourinist to a foreign correspondent, who has the impudent, flat face of a *choumacre*, begs him not to leave before the end, scolds Méjean, who does not support her, and treats him as a false Southerner, — a renegade.

In a group at one side, politics is discussed; and a scornful mouth is put forward, shaping words to roll them like balls in the foam on the teeth, that they may spit forth poison. "All that the most subversive demagoguism —"

"—Marat a conservative!" says a voice; but the remark is lost in the general buzz of conversation, with the clashing of plates and glasses, which the copper-like *timbre* of Roumestan's voice suddenly drowns. "Ladies, quick, ladies! You will miss the sonata in *fa*!"

There was the silence of death; and the long procession of floating trains re-crosses the *salons*, and rustles

against the rows of chairs. The women wear the despondent faces of prisoners returned to their cells after an hour's walk in the prison-yard. The concertos and symphonies follow in turn, by dint of notes. The handsome Mayol begins to spin out his weak notes, and Vauters tries the strained chords of her voice. There is a sudden commotion and curiosity as at the entrance of the little Bachellery. It is on account of Valmajour's tambourine, and the appearance of the superb peasant, with his soft felt cap over one ear, his red belt around his waist, and the peasant-jacket on his shoulder. It was an idea of Audiberte, an instinct of her woman's taste, to dress him thus, to give more effect among the black coats. It was all very well; for the long tambourine swinging on the musician's arm, and the little flute over which his fingers fly, and the pretty airs played on two instruments whose lively and stirring movement causes a thrill that gives a wavy look to beautiful satin shoulders, was something new and unexpected. The *blasé* public is delighted with these perfectly fresh serenades, and refrains of ancient France embalmed in rosemary.

"Bravo, bravo, *encore!*" And when he attacks the "March of Turenne" with a broad, victorious rhythm, which the orchestra accompanies in an undertone swelling, and sustaining the rather frail instrument, there is delirious enthusiasm. He has to return twice, a dozen times, applauded at the first bar by Numa, whose zeal has become warm again at this success, and who now gives himself the credit of "the fancy of the ladies." He tells how he discovered this genius, and explains the wonders of the flute with three stops, and gives the details about the old castle of the Valmajours.

"Is his name really Valmajour?"

"Certainly. Descended from the princes of Baux : he is the last."

And the legend is spread around and embellished, like a true romance of George Sand.

"I have the parchments at home," affirms Bompard in a tone that will permit no reply.

But, in the midst of this society enthusiasm more or less pretended, one poor little heart becomes moved, and a young head is carried away, and takes the bravos and legends seriously. Without saying a word, without even applauding, with eyes fixed and abstracted, her long supple figure following with a dreamy swaying the measures of the heroic march, Hortense finds herself there in Provence, on the high steps overlooking the sunny landscape, while her musician serenades her as a lady in the courts of love, and she fastens the pomegranate-flower to his tambourine with shy grace. This memory moves her delightfully ; and, leaning her head on her sister's shoulder, she murmurs, "Oh, how happy I am !" with a deep, true sentiment that Rosalie does not notice at once, but which later will become more evident, and haunt her like a whisper of misfortune.

"*Eh, bé !* my worthy Valmajour, did I not tell you so ? A great success, *hein ?*" cried Roumestan in the little room where a lunch had been served for the artists. The other stars of the concert thought this success somewhat exaggerated. Vauters, who was sitting and waiting for her carriage, veiled her spite in a big lace hood which exhaled a pungent perfume ; while the handsome Mayol, who pretended to have a weak back, was standing before the sideboard, and ferociously carving a bird, imagining that he had the tambourinist under the blade of his knife. The little Bachellery shared none of this

anger. She played the child among a group of young swells, laughing and fluttering about like a butterfly, taking a full mouthful of bread and ham, like a growing schoolboy tormented by hunger. She tried Valmajour's flute.

"See, *M'sieu le ministre*." Then perceiving Cardaillac behind his Excellency, she gave a little *pirouette*, and held up her forehead to be kissed, like a little girl.

"G'day, uncle."

It was an imaginary relationship, an adoption of the green-room.

"Giddy-headed humbug!" muttered the showman under his white mustache, but not too loud, for she was probably going to be an influential member of his theatre.

Valmajour, surrounded by women and journalists, stood with a foppish air before the mantle-piece. The foreign correspondent questioned him rudely, no longer with the wheedling tone with which he examined ministers in private audiences; but the peasant, without disturbing himself, answered with his stereotyped story, "It came to me at night while listening to the nightingale." He was interrupted by Mlle. Le Quesnoy, who handed him a glass of wine and a plate of refreshments.

"Good-evening, sir. It is now my turn to bring you the *grand-boire*," she said; but her words failed to have their proper effect. He answered with a slight nod, pointing to the mantle-piece, "Very well, very well; put it there," and continued his story. Hortense, without becoming discouraged, waited for the end, then spoke to him of his father and sister.

"She will be very glad."

"Yes: it did not pass off badly."

With a foppish smile, he twirled his mustache, and

cast an anxious look round him. They told him that the director of the Opéra wished to make him proposals. He watched him from a distance, already feeling the jealousy of an actor, and was astonished that any one could pay attention so long to that little singer who was nobody at all; and, absorbed in this thought, he did not take the trouble to answer the handsome young girl standing before him, with her fan in her hands, in that pretty, half-bold attitude which is a habit of society. But she liked him better for being disdainful and cold about all that did not belong to his art. She admired him as he received from his height the compliments with which Cardaillac bombarded him in his brusque, plain way.

"Yes indeed, yes indeed. I tell you just what I think. Much talent, very original, very new. I do not wish any other theatre than the opera-house to have the first performance. I shall seek an opportunity to bring you out. From to-day you may look upon yourself as belonging to my theatre."

Valmajour thought of the stamped paper which he had in the pocket of his jacket; but Cardaillac, as if he divined his idea, held out his supple hand. "This is what binds both of us, my dear fellow," he said, pointing to Mayol and La Vauters, who were happily occupied with something else, for they would have laughed too much. "Ask your comrades what the word of Cardaillac is worth."

He turned upon his heels at this, and returned to the ball-room. Now there was dancing in the rooms that were the least crowded though the most lively, and the admirable orchestra avenged itself for three hours of classical music by a succession of purely Viennese waltzes. The distinguished persons and the grave people having

left, the place remained to the young, those mad lovers of pleasure, who dance for the sake of dancing, to have their hair fly wildly about in their dizzy whirl, to have their eyes in a misty blur, and their trains wound round their feet. Then, too, politics must be considered: the fusion dreamed of by Roumestan was hardly being accomplished. One of the two *salons* in which there was dancing was occupied by the Left Centre; the other by the spotless lily-white faction, in spite of Hortense's efforts to unite the two parties. Being very *recherchée*, the sister-in-law of the minister, and a daughter of the first president, she saw a flock of open vests hovering around her large fortune and influence. Lappara, who was very much excited, declared to her while dancing that his Excellency had permitted him —

But the waltz coming to a close, she left him without waiting for the end of his sentence, and came to Mèjean, who did not dance, and could not make up his mind to leave.

"What a strange face you have, grave, reasoning man!" she said.

He took her by the hand, saying, "Sit down here: I have something to say to you. Authorized by my minister" —

He smiled, very much moved; and at the trembling of his lips Hortense understood, and rose very quickly.

"No, not this evening. I cannot listen: I am going to dance;" and she moved away on the arm of Roche-maure, who had come to claim her for the *cotillon*. He, too, was very much enamoured; and, still imitating Lappara, the good young man ventured to pronounce a word that made her start with a gay whirl, which she kept up all around the room; and, when the figure of the scarf

was ended, she went to her sister, and said in a low tone, —

“We are in a nice position. Numa has promised me to his three secretaries.”

“Which one will you have?”

Her answer was cut short by a roll on the tambourine.

“The *farandole* ! the *farandole* !” A surprise of the minister to his guests, — the *farandole* to finish the *cotillon*, the South carried to excess *et zou* ! But how is it danced? Hands are held out and joined, and the *salons* mingle this time. Bompard gravely explains, “This is the way, young ladies,” beating an *entre-chat*; and with Hortense at the head, the *farandole* unwinds through the long row of *salons*, followed by Valmajour, who played with haughty gravity, proud of his success and the looks bestowed upon his manly and robust figure in his original costume. “Isn’t it beautiful !” said Roumestan : “ isn’t it beautiful ! a Greek shepherd !” From room to room the rustic dance, being longer drawn out as more engage in it, pursues and drives away the shadow of Frayssinous. On the grand tapestries, after Boucher and Lancret, the people, aroused by the airs of old times, move faster, and the Cupids floating on the friezes seem in the eyes of the dancers to be flying along as madly as they.

Yonder, at the extreme end of the room, is Cardaillac, leaning against a buffet, with a plate and glass in his hands, listening, eating, and drinking, and filled with the glow of pleasure to the depths of his sceptical nature.

“Remember, my boy,” he is saying to Boissarie, “you must always remain until the end of the ball. Women are prettier in that dead paleness, which is not yet fatigue any more than this little white streak at the windows is yet day. There is music in the air, perfumed dust, and a

partial intoxication, which refines sensation, and which must be enjoyed while eating a piece of cold fowl, watered with iced wine. Here ! look at me."

Behind the clear sheet of glass the dancers of the *farandole* wound along, with arms extended, in a line of alternate black and light color, made irregular by the curving effect of toilets and head-dresses, and their crumpled appearance after two hours of dancing.

"Is it not pretty, *hein* ? What a spirited ending ! what a sweep there is ! But it will not bring in a *sou*," he added coldly, setting down his glass.

CHAPTER X.

NORTH AND SOUTH.

BETWEEN President Le Quesnoy and his son-in-law there had never been much sympathy. Time, frequent intercourse, and the ties of relationship, had not diminished the distance between these two natures, or removed the timid chill which the Southerner felt in the presence of this tall, silent man with a pale, haughty face, whose blue-gray eyes were Rosalie's eyes without her tenderness and indulgence, and looked freezingly down on his enthusiasm. Numa, who was wavering and fickle in character, and profuse in words, at once ardent and confused, rebelled against the logic, uprightness, and stern character of his father-in-law; and, while envying him these qualities, attributed them to the coldness of the man of the extreme North, which the president represented. "After which comes the white bear; then nothing, the Pole, and death."

He flattered him, however, and tried to seduce him with artful, cat-like ways, baits wherewith to catch the Gaul; but the Gaul, deeper than he was, did not allow himself to be caught. And when they talked politics, on Sunday, in the dining-room of the Place Royale, when Numa, softened by the good cheer, really tried to convince the old Le Quesnoy that they were in fact very near understanding each other, both wishing the same thing, — liberty, — you should have seen the rebellious

toss of the head with which the president shook himself out of his meshes. Ah ! no, indeed : there was no point of union between them. In four close, concise arguments he re-established the distances, unmasked his words, and showed that he would not be deceived by their hypocrisy. The lawyer got out of it by joking, though greatly vexed at heart, especially on account of his wife, who, without ever interesting herself in politics, listened and looked on. Then, when returning at evening in their carriage, he tried to prove to her that her father lacked good sense. Ah ! if it had not been for her, he would have given him a splendid repulse. Rosalie, in order not to irritate him, avoided giving an opinion.

"Yes, it is unfortunate : you do not understand each other," she said ; but to herself she declared the president in the right.

With Roumestan's arrival at the ministry the coldness between the two men became more manifest. M. Le Quesnoy refused to show himself at the receptions in the Rue de Grenelle, and expressed himself very plainly to his daughter : —

"Say to your husband, that he may continue to come to my house as often as possible, and that I shall be very happy to see him.; but he will never see me at the ministry. I know what those people are preparing for us, and I do not wish to have the appearance of being an accomplice."

This situation was respected in the eyes of the world on account of the domestic affliction which had kept the Le Quesnoys walled up at home so long. The Minister of Public Instruction would probably have been very much annoyed to see in his *salons* this vigorously contradicting man, before whom he was made to feel like a

little boy: he affected, however, to appear wounded at this decision, and on account of it took an attitude, which is always very valuable to a comedian, and made it a pretext to appear only very irregularly at the Sunday dinners, where Rosalie often presented herself alone; and he made those thousand excuses, commissions, re-unions, and banquets, which were incumbent upon him, and which give political husbands so wide a liberty.

She, on the contrary, did not miss a Sunday. She arrived early in the afternoon, happy to gratify in the home of her parents her taste for the family circle, which official life gave her little leisure to satisfy. If Mme. Le Quesnoy were still at vespers, and Hortense at church with her, or escorted to a musical *matinée* by some gentleman, she was sure to find her father in his library, a long room lined from floor to ceiling with books, shut up with these silent and intellectual confidants and friends, the only ones which his grief had not made him repel.

The president did not seat himself to read, but looked over the shelves, stopped before a handsomely bound book, and still standing read, without being conscious of it, for an hour, aware neither of time nor fatigue. A wan smile passed over his face as he saw his eldest daughter enter. They exchanged only a few words, for neither of them were talkers; and she, too, passed her beloved authors in review, chose a volume, and turned over the leaves in the rather sombre light of a large court of the *Marais* where the heavy tones of the vesper-bells near by fell on the Sunday silence of a business neighborhood. Sometimes he gave her a partly-opened book with the remark, —

“Read this,” marking a line under it with his nail; and when she had read it he asked, —

“Is it not beautiful?”

There was no greater pleasure for this young woman, to whom life offered all that it could give that was brilliant and luxurious, than to be in this hour near her sad and aged father, towards whom her filial adoration was increased by the tie of intellectual sympathy. She owed to him her correctness of thought, and that sense of justice that made her so valiant, also her artistic taste, her love for painting and fine poetry; for Le Quesnoy's continual poring over questions of law had not left him like a mummy.

Her mother Rosalie loved and venerated, though slightly rebelling against a nature that was very simple and mild, and of little power in her own house. She was one whom grief, which elevates certain souls, had bowed to the ground in the most common feminine occupations, in the small details of the household and also in piety. Though younger than her husband, she seemed older with her old-woman style of conversation, like one who, aged and saddened, seeks the warm corners of memory, and reminders of her childhood in a sunny home in the South. But the Church engaged her more than all else. Since the death of her son, she stifled her sorrow in the silence and coolness and in the dim light of lofty naves, where it was peaceful as in a cloister, shut out from the noisy sounds of life by heavy barred doors, with the selfish and cowardly devoutness of despair which kneels before a *prie-Dieu*, and rids itself of cares and duties.

Rosalie, who at the time of their misfortune was already a young lady, had noticed the different manner with which her parents yielded, — her mother renouncing every thing, and swallowed up in tearful religion, and her father asking strength to fulfil his duties. Her tender

preference for him was the choice of her reason. Marriage and every-day life, with the exaggerations, falsehood, and folly of her Southerner made her find the retirement of the quiet library still sweeter because it was so unlike the pretentious, cheerless official apartments of the minister. In the midst of their quiet talk, a door was heard to open, and there was a rustle of silk ; and Hortense entered.

"I knew I should find you here," she cried.

She was not fond of reading. Even novels wearied her, for they were never romantic enough for her exalted state. After she had been moving about for five minutes with her hat on, she said, —

"All these old papers make it smell close here : don't you think so, Rosalie ? Come with me a little while. Father has had you long enough. It is my turn now."

And she drew her into their room, which Rosalie had also occupied until her twentieth year. During an hour's charming interview she looked around at all the objects which had made part of herself, — her bed with cretonne curtains, her desk, *étagère*, and book-case where a little of her childhood remained in the titles of the volumes, and her youth was lovingly preserved in a thousand trifles. She found the thoughts of the past in every corner of the room, which was that of a young girl, although more coquettish and adorned than when she occupied it. There was a carpet on the floor, a night-lamp in a corolla on the ceiling, and little fragile sewing and writing tables at every step. There was more elegance and less order. There were two or three kinds of partly finished work flung over the backs of some chairs, and an open desk filled with note-paper scattered about. When one entered, there was always a disturbance of half a second's duration.

"It is the wind," said Hortense, bursting into laughter. "It knows that I adore it, and came to see if I were here."

"The window must have been left open," answered Rosalie quietly. "I cannot imagine, for my part, how you can live here."

She rose to straighten a picture on the wall; for it troubled her eye, which was as true as her mind.

"It is just the contrary with me: it stirs me. It seems to me that I am at sea," said Hortense.

This difference of nature was also to be found in the faces of the two sisters. Rosalie had regular features, with well-defined lines, calm eyes, and a color changing as a stream whose source is deep. Her sister had irregular features on a pale creole complexion and a *spirituelle* expression. It was the North and South of the father and mother united without being blended, each perpetuating their race. Although their every-day life was the same, and they had the same education in a large boarding-school, which had made her sister a serious, attentive woman, who thought wholly of the present moment, being absorbed in her slightest acts, the mind of Hortense became troubled, chimerical, and anxious, and was always excited. Sometimes, on seeing her so agitated, Rosalie would exclaim, —

"I am very fortunate: I have no imagination."

"I have nothing else," said Hortense; and she reminded her that in M. Baudry's course, which he pompously called his "class of imagination," in which he taught style and the development of thought, Rosalie had no success, expressing every thing in a few concise words; while she herself, with only half of an idea, would blacken volumes. "The prize for imagination was the only one I ever had."

They were tenderly united, in spite of every thing, with

the affection of an older for a younger sister, in which there is both the filial and maternal sentiment. Rosalie took her with her everywhere, — to balls, to calls on her friends, and while shopping, which so refines the taste of Parisian ladies. Even after leaving school she remained her little mother. And now she was busying herself in trying to marry her, — to find the quiet, safe companion indispensable to that giddy head, and the firm arm necessary to steady her in her impulsive movements. Méjean was pointed out; but Hortense, who at first had not objected, suddenly showed a marked antipathy. The sisters became confidants the day after the ministerial *seizure*, when Rosalie became aware of the emotion and trouble of Hortense.

"Oh, he is good! I like him very well," said Hortense. "He is a loyal friend such as one would like to have near through life; but he is not the husband I need."

"Why not?"

"You will laugh, but he does not speak sufficiently to my imagination. Marriage with him looks to me like a rectangular *bourgeois* house at the end of an alley as straight as the letter I. And you know that I like quite the reverse, the unforeseen, surprises."

"Who, then, have you in mind? M. de Lappara?"

"Thanks, if he does not prefer his tailor to me."

"M. de Rochemaure?"

"The model scribbler: I who have a horror of writing-paper!"

And as Rosalie, wishing in her anxiety to know all, questioned her closely, the young girl said, while a light flush like a straw-colored flame suffused her pale face. "What I would like" — Then her voice changed with a comical expression.

“I would like to marry Bompard, — yes, Bompard is the husband of my dreams. At least he has imagination as a resource against monotony.”

She rose, walked up and down the room, with her head thrown forward, which made her seem taller than she was. People did not know Bompard — what pride he had, what a dignified life he led, and how logical with all his madness. “Numa wished to give him a place near him, and he would not accept it. He preferred to live on his chimera. Yet they accuse the South of being practical and industrious. Here is one who belies the legend. Stay! it comes to me now, — he told me about it at the ball the other evening, — he has an incubator which will hatch ostrich-eggs. He is sure to earn millions. He is much happier than if he had them. Why, that man is always a magician! Give me Bompard. I wish only Bompard.”

“Well, I shall find out nothing more to-day,” thought the older sister, who divined something deep under this badinage.

One Sunday Rosalie, on arriving, found in the ante-chamber Mme. Le Quesnoy waiting for her, who said to her mysteriously, —

“There is some one in the *salon*, — a lady from the South.”

“Aunt Portal?”

“You will see.”

It was not Mme. Portal, but a smart-looking Provençal girl, whose rustic bow ended in a burst of laughter.

“Hortense!”

With her skirt meeting her flat shoes, her corsage enlarged by the tulle folds of her broad fichu, her face framed by the falling waves of hair confined by the little

cap ornamented with stamped velvet embroidered with ~~set~~ butterflies, Hortense resembled the "*chato*" that one sees on Sunday coquetting on the Lice d'Arles, or walking two by two with half-closed eyes between the columns of the cloister of St. Trophyme, whose delicate carving harmonizes with the Sarrasine carnations and with the church ivory where in broad daylight glimmer the clear rays of a taper.

"Do you think she is pretty?" said the mother, charmed at this living personification of the country of her youth. Rosalie, on the contrary, involuntarily shuddered with sadness, as if this costume carried her sister far, far away from her.

"That is a strange fancy. It becomes you; but I like you even better as a Parisian lady. Who dressed you so well?"

"Audiberte Valmajour. She has just left here."

"How often she comes!" said Rosalie, passing into their room to take off her hat. "What a friendship! I shall be jealous."

Hortense, somewhat embarrassed, made excuses. It gave pleasure to their mother to see this Southern head-dress worn in the house.

"Does it not, mother?" she cried from one room to the other. Then this poor girl was so out of her element in Paris, and so interesting in her blind devotion to the genius of her brother!

"Genius!" said the elder sister, shaking her head.

"Certainly. You saw the other evening at your house what an effect it produced, and it is the same everywhere." And Rosalie answered that it was necessary to consider at its true worth this society success founded on favor, on "*chic*," and the caprice of a *soirée*.

"Yet he is at the Opéra," Hortense replied. The velvet band on the little cap stirred rebelliously, as if it had really covered one of those exalted heads whose proud profile it accompanies in the South. Besides, these Valmajours, unlike other peasants, were the last representatives of a noble decayed family —

Rosalie, who was standing before the tall psyche, turned round laughing, —

"What ! you believe that legend ?"

"Why, of course. They come directly from the Princes des Baux. They have the papers, and the arms on their rustic door. The day they wish" —

Rosalie shuddered. Behind the peasant player of the flute, was the prince. With any one who had received a prize for imagination, that fact might become dangerous.

"There is no truth in it," but she laughed no more : "there exist in the region of the Aps ten families of this *soi-disant* princely name. Whoever told you any thing else lied through vanity, through." —

"Why, it was Numa, your husband. The other evening at the ministry he gave all the facts."

"Oh ! with him, you know, matters must be put in a favorable light, as he says."

Hortense was no longer listening. She had returned to the *salon*, and, being seated at the piano, was singing in a ringing voice, —

"Mount' as passa ta matinado,
Mourbieù, Marioun ?"

It was to an air grave as church-music, an ancient popular song of Provence, which Numa taught his sister-in-law, and which he amused himself in hearing her sing, with her Parisian accent, which, gliding over the Southern

articulations, made one think of Italian pronounced by an English lady.

"Where have you been all the morning, *morbleu*, Marioun?
At the spring, drawing water, God knows, my dear.
What fellow was talking with you, *morbleu*, Marioun?
A lady companion of mine, God knows, my dear.
Women do not wear breeches, *morbleu*, Marioun.
Her dress clung tightly around her, God knows, my dear.
Women carry no sword, *morbleu*, Marioun.
'Twas her braid hanging down, God knows, my dear.
Women wear no mustaches, *morbleu*, Marioun.
She was eating some mulberries, God knows, my dear.
Mulberries do not ripen in May, *morbleu*, Marioun.
It was a branch of last autumn, God knows, my dear.
Bring me a plateful, *morbleu*, Marioun.
Little birds have eaten them all, God knows, my dear.
I will cut off your head, *morbleu*, Marioun.
What will you do with what's left, my God, my dear?
Throw it out of the window, *morbleu*, Marioun,
For a feast for the cats and the dogs."

She interrupted herself to toss off, with the gesture and intonation of Numa, when he became excited, "There, do you see, my children? It is as fine as Shakspeare."

"Yes; a *tableau* of customs," said Rosalie, drawing near. "The husband is rude and brutal; and the wife is feline in her nature and untruthful,—a true Southern household."

"Oh, my daughter!" said Mme. Le Quesnoy in a tone of gentle reproach, the habitual one of former quarrels.

The piano-stool turned quickly round on its pivot, and brought opposite Rosalie the cap of the indignant Provençal girl.

"That is too much. What has the South done to you? As for me, I adore it. I did not know it, but that

journey you made me take revealed to me my true country. It is in vain that I was baptized at St. Paul: I belong to that region, and am a child of the *placette*. You know, mamma, one of these days we will plant these cold Westerners here, and both of us will go and live in our beautiful South, where people sing and dance, — the South of the wind, the sun, the mirage, and whatever rounds out life, and makes it poetical. *It is there that I would li-i-ive,*” and her skilful hands touched the piano again, dispersing her dream in a *brouhaha* of ringing notes.

“Not a word of the tambourine,” thought Rosalie. “It is serious.” It was even more serious than she imagined. On the very day that Audiberte saw the young lady fasten a flower to her brother’s tambourine, a splendid vision of the future arose in her ambitious mind, which had some influence in the transplanting of her family. The reception that Hortense gave when she went to lay her complaints before her, and her eagerness in running to meet Numa, strengthened an as yet vague hope. And then, slowly, without broaching the subject to the men of her family other than by an occasional quiet word, and gliding and creeping along, she prepared the way with her almost Italian duplicity. From the kitchen in the Place Royale, where she began by timidly waiting in a corner on the edge of a chair, she made her way to the *salon*, and, with dress and hair always neat, sat in the background like a poor relation. Hortense raved about her, and showed her to her friends as a pretty trinket brought from that Provence of which she spoke with so much ardor. And Audiberte, making herself more simple than by nature itself, exaggerated her rustic timidity, and, repressing her disgust at the dull sky

of Paris, burst forth into very pretty exclamations of "*Boudiou*," by which she tried to make herself appear like the artless girl of the play. The president himself smiled at this *boudiou*; and to make the president smile!

But it was at the young girl's house when alone with her that she brought into play all her coaxing, feline ways. Suddenly she would kneel at her feet, take her hands, and go into ecstasies over the slightest grace of her toilet, her style of making a ribbon bow, and dressing her hair, uttering to her face those bold compliments that nevertheless give pleasure, because they seem so spontaneous and artless. When the young lady alighted from her carriage before the *mas*, she thought she saw in her person the queen of the angels, and was so overcome that she could not speak; and her brother, *pécaïré*, when hearing the carriage that brought the Parisian lady grate over the stones as it came down the hill, said that it seemed to him as if those stones fell one by one on his heart. She dwelt on this brother, his pride and anxiety. Why should he be anxious, I should like to know? Since the minister's *soirée* all the papers had spoken of him, and his picture was everywhere, and he had more invitations to the Faubourg of St. Germain than he could accept. Duchesses and countesses wrote him perfumed notes, with crests on the paper, as on the carriages which they sent for him; but then he was not happy, poor fellow!

All this spoken low in Hortense's ear communicated to her a little of the fever, and affected her through the magnetic will of the peasant-girl: so, without looking at her, she asked if Valmajour had not perhaps a sweetheart waiting for him in the country.

"He, a sweetheart? *Avai!* you do not know him.

He thinks too much of himself to wish a peasant. The most wealthy women are after him, — one of the Combettes, and another woman ; and girls are trying to flirt with him, — I couldn't tell you how many, — and he hasn't so much as looked at one of them. Who can tell what is going on in his mind? Oh these artists !”

And this word, that was new to her, sounded on her ignorant lips like some indefinable term, similar to the Latin of mass, or like a cabalistic formula found in the “Grand-Albert.” The inheritance of cousin Puyfourcat was mentioned very often in her artful remarks. There are few families in the South, whether artisans or *bourgeois*, who have not their cousin Puyfourcat, the seeker of adventures, who sets off in his youth, and who never writes home, and whom they love to fancy very rich. It is a lottery-ticket dated a long time ahead, an imaginary venture on a remote prospect of fortune which one at last firmly believes real. Audiberte had faith in the cousin's inheritance, and she spoke of it to the young girl less to dazzle her than to diminish the social distance separating them. At Puyfourcat's death the brother would buy back Valmajour, have the castle rebuilt, and make valid his title of nobility, since every one said that the necessary proof existed.

At the conclusion of these long talks, prolonged sometimes until twilight, Hortense remained silent a long time, with her forehead leaning against the window-pane, and beheld rise before her in a rosy winter sunset the lofty towers of the restored castle, with the platform of the steps gay with streams of light, and serenades in honor of the lady of the manor.

“*Boudiou*, how late it is !” cried the peasant, seeing that she had led her to the point where she wished her to

remain ; "and the dinner of my men is not ready. I must run."

Valmajour often came to wait for her below, but she never allowed him to go up stairs. She felt he was so awkward and rough, and had no thought of fascinating the young lady. Audiberte as yet had no need of him.

Another person who embarrassed her, and whom it was difficult to avoid, was Rosalie, with whom the kittenish ways and pretended artlessness had no influence. In her presence Audiberte, her terrible black eyebrows deeply wrinkled, stopped talking ; and in the silence there rose up within her a hatred of race, and a weak, sour, and vindictive anger against the most serious obstacle to her plans. This was her real complaint, but she confessed others to the little sister. Rosalie did not like the tambourine : then "she was not faithful to church service ;" and a woman who is not, don't you see ? Audiberte was so, in the extreme : she did not miss a single service, and always was present at communion. That did not influence her at all in her morals ; for she was a liar, a hypocrite, and violent even to a criminal degree, finding in texts only precepts for vengeance and hatred. Yet she remained a virtuous girl in the feminine sense of the word. Although she was twenty-eight years old, and had a pretty face, she preserved, in the common society in which they now moved, the severe chastity of her thick peasant's fichu which was drawn tightly over a heart that had beaten only with sisterly ambition.

"Hortense makes me anxious. Look at her."

Rosalie, to whom her mother confided this in a corner of the *salon* at the ministry, believed that Mme. Le Questenoy shared her mistrust ; but the mother's remark ap-

plied to the health of Hortense, who had not succeeded in being cured of a severe cold. Rosalie looked at her sister. She still had her dazzling complexion, vivacity, and gayety. She still coughed a little, but what of it? all Parisian ladies do after the season of balls. The fine weather would very soon cure her.

"Have you spoken of her to Jarras?"

Jarras was a friend of Roumestan, a former *habitué* of the Café Malmus. He said that it was not serious, and advised the waters of Arvillard.

"She must go there," said Rosalie eagerly, delighted at having this excuse for carrying off Hortense.

"Yes; but your father will be left all alone."

"I will go and see him every day."

And suddenly the poor mother confessed with sobs the dread that this journey with her daughter gave her. For a whole year she had to run about thus to watering-places for the child they had already lost. Was she going to make the same pilgrimage over again, with the same frightful end in prospect? The other was taken in his twentieth year, in his full health and strength.

"O mamma, mamma! will you be silent?" said Rosalie, gently scolding her. Hortense was not ill: the physician said so. This journey would be simply a distraction. Arvillard, the Dauphiny Alps, was a wonderful country. She herself would really like to accompany Hortense. Unfortunately she could not, — important reasons.

"Yes, I understand, — your husband, the ministry."

"Oh, no! it is not that."

And to her mother, in the confidence of heart which they could rarely enjoy together, she whispered, —

“Listen ; but it is for yourself alone, for no one knows it, not even Numa.”

Then she confessed the as yet very faint hope of a great happiness of which she had despaired, which made her wild with joy and fear, — the new hope of a child perhaps to come to her.

CHAPTER XI.

A WATERING-PLACE.

“ ARVILLARD-LES-BAINS, Aug. 2, 1876.

“IT is a very curious place from which I write you. Imagine a very high, square hall, paved, stuccoed, and full of echoes, where the light from two large windows is veiled to the lowest panes by blue curtains, and darkened even more by a kind of floating mist impregnated with sulphur, that clings to clothing and tarnishes gold jewelry. Inside, people are sitting near the walls on benches, chairs, and stools, around little tables ; they look at their watches every minute, and rise and leave to make place for others, disclosing each time, through the partly open door, a crowd of bathers walking in the light vestibule, and the fluttering white aprons of servant-girls hurrying along. There is no noise : on the contrary, it is as solemn as in a church, notwithstanding all the commotion, and the continual murmur of low-voiced conversation, the unfolding of newspapers, and the scratching of pens. In the middle of the hall is a large fountain of refreshing mineral water, whose force is broken against a metallic disk, from which it falls in innumerable jets, and with a musical trickle, into vase after vase, then rises in foam. It is the hall of inhalation.

“I must tell you, my darling, that all the world do not inhale alike. Thus the old gentleman who is opposite me this moment follows the physician's prescriptions to

the letter. I recognize them all. He sits with his feet on a cricket, his chest expanded, elbows drawn in, and the mouth always open to facilitate breathing. Poor dear man, how he inhales ! with what confidence, how quietly, and with what little round, devout, credulous eyes, which seem to say to the fountain, 'Oh, fount of Arvillard, see how I inhale you, and how much faith I have in you ! cure me !' Then we have the sceptic, who inhales as if unintentionally, with his back turned, shrugging his shoulders, and looking at the ceiling. Then there are the discouraged ones, true invalids, who feel the uselessness and worthlessness of it all ; for instance, a poor lady, my neighbor, who carries her finger quickly to her mouth after every cough, to see if her glove has not a red spot on its finger. And yet they manage to be just as gay as ever. Ladies in the same hotel draw their chairs together, sit in groups, and embroider, gossip in low voices, and comment on the contents of the 'Bather's Journal' and the list of arrivals. Young persons display English romances with red covers, and priests read their breviary. There are many priests at Arvillard, especially missionaries, with heavy beards and yellow faces, and subdued voices from having long preached the word of God. As for me, you know that romances are not to my taste, especially romances of to-day, in which every thing is founded on real life. I carry on my correspondence with two or three selected victims, — Marie Bérurier, Aurélie Dansaert, and you, my big sister, whom I adore. You must expect real journals. Think of it ! two hours inhalation four times a day. No one here inhales so long as I do, which means that I am a genuine phenomenon. People look at me a great deal for this reason, and I am quite proud of it. There is no other treatment, however,

excepting the glass of mineral water which I go to the fountain to drink morning and evening, and which must triumph over the obstinate veil which this ugly cold has left on my voice. The cure of bronchial troubles is a specialty of the Arvillard waters, and therefore singers make this a resort. The handsome Mayol has just left us with almost new vocal chords. Mlle. Bachellery, you know, the little *diva* of your *fête*, finds so much benefit from the treatment, that, after having finished the three regular weeks, she has begun three more, for which the 'Bather's Journal' gives her much praise. We have the honor of living in the same hotel with this young and illustrious person, who is peculiarly dressed by a tender mother from Bordeaux, who at the *table d'hôte* forces her appetite by salad, and talks about the hat that cost one hundred and forty francs, and was worn by her young daughter at the last *Longchamps*. A delightful couple, who are very much admired by us.

"They pride themselves on the pretty ways of Baby, as her mother calls her, her laugh and *roulades*, and the fluttering of her short skirt. People crowd in front of the hotel to see her play croquet with the little girls and boys, — she plays only with very little ones, — and run, jump, and throw her ball like a real romp. 'I am going to roquet you, M. Paul,' she says.

"Every one thinks, 'She is such a child!' But I believe this pretended childishness, like her skirts with big bows and her way of wearing her hair, is part of a *rôle*. Then, she has such an extraordinary way of embracing that stout Bordelaise woman, of hanging round her neck, and of being trotted on her knee, and clasped to her bosom before every one! You know how caressing I am naturally: well, truly, I should be ashamed to embrace

mamma in that manner. A very curious family too, but less gay, is that of the Prince and Princess d'Anhalt, who, with their daughter, governess, *femmes-de-chambre*, and suite, occupy all the first story of the hotel in which they are the distinguished characters. I often meet the princess on the stairs, ascending step by step, and supported by the arm of her husband, a handsome, dashing man in a hat trimmed with blue gimp, whose face is radiant with health. She is carried to the establishment in a chair; and it is heart-rending to see the pale, hollow face behind the little glass window, and the father and child walking at her side, the child very sickly and having every feature of her mother, and perhaps also her malady. The little eight-year-old, who is forbidden to play with the other children, and from the balcony of the hotel sadly watches the games of croquet and the riding-parties, is lonely. They think she is too high-born for common amusements, and prefer to keep her in the gloomy atmosphere of the dying mother, or near the father, who escorts her round with an arrogant and weary face, or leaves her to the servants. But, heavens! nobility is, then, a pest, a malady, that is on the increase. These people eat by themselves in a little parlor, and inhale apart, — for there are halls for families, — and imagine how dismal must be such a *tête-à-tête* with that woman and child, as if in a great silent cave!

“The other evening, there were very many of us in the large parlor on the ground-floor where people assemble for light games, singing, and sometimes even for dancing. Mamma Bachellery came to accompany Baby in a cavatina of an opera. ‘We wish to appear in the opera. We even came to Arvillard to recuperate our voice for that,’ according to the mother’s elegant expression.

Suddenly the door opened, and the princess appeared, stately in her languor and her elegance, and wrapped in a lace mantle which concealed the frightful and significant thinness of her shoulders. The child and the husband followed.

“‘Continue, I beg you,’ coughs the poor woman. Then the stupid little singer goes and chooses the most heart-rending and sentimental romance in all her *repertoire*, ‘Vorrei Morir,’¹ an Italian song similar to our ‘Dead Leaves,’ about an invalid who fixes the date of her death in autumn, to give herself the illusion that all nature, enveloped in the early mist as in a shroud, is expiring with her.

‘Vorrei morir ne la stagion dell’ anno.’

“The air is graceful, and of a sadness that prolongs the caress of the Italian words. The desire to live until autumn, the entreaty for a truce and respite in the malady, had a painfully touching effect in the large parlor, where through the open windows came the sweet smells, floating objects, and the cool breezes of a beautiful summer night. The princess, without saying a word, arose and abruptly left the room. In the darkness of the garden I heard a deep sob, and a man’s voice gently chiding, and the tearful tones of a child that sees its mother in sorrow.

“Watering-places are made sad by these painful cases of ill health, by the obstinate coughs, heard so plainly through the walls of the hotel, handkerchiefs carefully held to the mouth to avoid the air, by the confidential talk whose meaning can be divined by sorrowful gestures always pointing to the chest or shoulder in the region of the collar-bone, and by the slow dreamy walk,

¹ “I long to die.” — TRANS.

the mind of the invalid being intent on the malady. Poor mamma, who knows every stage of lung-troubles, says that at Eaux-Bonnes and Mount Dore it is very different from what it is here. They send to Arvillard only convalescents like myself, or desperate cases which nothing can help. Fortunately in our hotel *des alpes Dauphinoises* there are only three invalids of this kind, — the princess, and two young persons from Lyons, a brother and sister, and orphans, who are very wealthy, it is said, and seem to be in the last stages, — especially the sister, who has the wan face of a drowned person; and also some ladies from Lyons, who, without a jewel or ribbon, being indifferent to coquettish adornment, wear wrappers with knit shawls wound round them. This wealthy lady looks forlorn; for she is given up, and knows it, and yields to despair. On the contrary, in the young man with a stooping figure, who is pinched in a tight fashionable jacket, there is a painful determination to live, and an incredible resistance to the malady.

“‘My sister has no elasticity, but I have,’ he said at table the other day, in a voice so worn that it sounded like the note C of Vauters, when she sings. In fact, he has remarkable elasticity. He is the leading spirit in the hotel, the organizer of plays, parties, and excursions; he rides horseback and on a small kind of sledge laden with branches, on which the mountaineers of the country drag one down the steepest declivities; he also waltzes and fences, all the while shaken by frightful coughing which does not cease for an instant. We have another case, a medical subject, Dr. Bouchereau; the one, you remember, mamma went to consult about our poor André. I do not know that he recognized us, but something very singular passed between us.

"I have just come from drinking my half-glass at the spring. This precious spring is only a ten-minutes' walk, as you ascend in the direction of the tall furnaces, and is situated in a gorge where a torrent, with moss-like foam, comes rolling down from the glacier, shining and clear, which shuts off the perspective between the blue Alps. Its invisible, snowy base seems to continually melt and become lost in the white, tossing waters. Imagine large black rocks dripping drop after drop among the heather and lichens, plantations of fir-trees of sombre verdure, and a soil in which fragments of mica sparkle in the charcoal-dust, and you will know the place. But what I cannot describe to you is the terrific noise, the torrent dashing against the stones, the trip-hammer of a saw-mill which it sets in motion, and in a narrow gorge, over a route that is always encumbered, the carts full of coal, and a line of animals and parties of excursionists, some going to drink the waters, and some returning. I forgot to mention the appearance, at the threshold of several wretched houses, of horrible male or female dwarfs with flat, stupid faces, with open mouths, muttering, and displaying a hideous goitre. Cretinism is one of the productions of the country. It seems that nature here is too strong for man, and that the minerals—iron, copper, and sulphur—repress, distort, and stifle him; that this water from the mountain-tops freezes him as it does the poor trees that grow up dwarfed between two rocks. It is another of those impressions made on arrival, the sadness and horror of which disappear after a few days.

"Now, instead of flying from them, I have my favorite victims of the goitre,—one in particular, a frightful little monster who sits on the side of the road in the arm-chair of a three-years-old child, although he is sixteen, the

exact age of Mlle. Bachellery. When I approach he wags his head, which is as heavy as a stone, and utters a hoarse cry, while looking subdued and seemingly unconscious; but, as soon as he receives a silver piece, he triumphantly holds it up to a charcoal-woman, who is watching him from the corner of a window. This unfortunate is a fortune envied by many mothers, and brings in more than his three brothers, who work in the furnaces of La Debout. The father does nothing: he is a consumptive, and passes the winter at his miserable fireside, and in summer sits with other invalids on a bench in the warm mist that the boiling spring gives forth. The nymph of the place, with a white apron and dripping hands, fills to the desired measure the glasses held out to her, while in the court at the side, separated from the road by a low wall, are seen faces, — the bodies belonging to them being invisible — that are thrown backward, with mouths wide open, while grimacing in the sunlight and contorted in the effort of drinking, and illustrating the hell of Dante, with the damned condemned to gargle. Sometimes, on leaving there, we return to the establishment by the longest way, and go down through the country. Mamma, whom the noise of the hotel wearies, and who, more than all, fears lest I dance too much in the *salon*, had an idea of hiring a small *bourgeois* house in Arvillard, where vacant ones are to be found. There are notices at every door, and on every story, swaying among the window-plants, between light and inviting curtains. One really wonders what becomes of the inhabitants during the season. Do they camp out in companies on the neighboring mountains, or do they live at the hotel for fifty francs a day? The latter would astonish me; for the longing of their eyes when they look at the

bather seems to me dangerously rapacious, — something that glitters and enchains one. I find everywhere the glittering look, and sudden brightening-up of the forehead, of my little fellow with the goitre, and the reflection of his silver coin. Behind the spectacles of the frisky little physician who sounds my lungs every morning ; in the eye of the kind, fair-spoken ladies who invite you to visit their houses, which have kitchens on the ground-floor, sleeping-rooms on the third story, and convenient gardens filled with small pools of water ; in the eye of drivers in short blouses and blackened hats, with broad ribbons, who beckon to you from the top of their vehicles to hire them ; in the look of the little driver of asses standing before the stable, whose open door discloses long, wagging ears within ; and even in the large, gentle, and wilful eyes of the asses, I have seen the metallic harshness that the love of money gives : it is real.

“ In addition their houses are frightful, shut in, gloomy, and without a view, and having every kind of inconvenience which cannot be concealed, because in the next house they are pointed out to you. We will decidedly hold to our caravansary of the Alpes Dauphinoises, with its innumerable green blinds against the red brick glaring in the sunlight on the height, and in the middle of an English park still new, with a hedge, a labyrinth, and gravelled walks, the enjoyment of which it shares with five or six other substantial hotels, — La Chevette, La Laita, Le Bréda, La Planta.

“ All these hotels with Savoyard names are in fierce competition : they spy and watch each other over the clusters of trees, and try to see which can make the most noise with bells, pianos, the cracking of the postilion's

whip, and of fireworks, and which will open its windows the widest, that the life, laughter, singing, and dancing may cause travellers opposite to say, 'What a good time they have over yonder ! how many people must be stopping there !'

"But the warmest battle between the rival inns is waged in the 'Bather's Journal,' in the lists of arrivals, which the little sheet gives with great promptitude twice a week.

"What envy and rage at the Laita and the Planta, when they read, for example, 'Prince and Princess d'Anhalt, and their suite, Alpes Dauphinoises.' Every thing pales before this crushing line. How can they answer it? They set their wits to work, and if you have a *de*, or any title whatsoever, they make a lavish display of it. The Chevette serves up the same inspector of forests in three different ways, — inspector, marquis, and chevalier of Saints Maurice and of Lazarus ; but the Alpes Dauphinoises is still in greatest favor without our having any thing to do with it. You know how modest and timid mamma is. She forbade Fanny telling who we were, because the position of our father, and that of your husband, would have drawn around us too much curiosity, and have made us too conspicuous. The journal simply said, 'Mesdames Le Quesnoy (from Paris), Alpes Dauphinoises ;' and, as Parisians are rare, our *incognito* has not been revealed. We have two very plain, quite convenient rooms, on the second floor, with the whole valley before us, a circle of mountains black with fir-trees beyond, over which play lights and shadows with lines of perpetual snow, and barren slopes interspersed with cultivated patches of green, yellow, and pink, among which hay-stacks seem no larger than bee-hives ; but this beautiful view does not keep us

in the house much of the time. In the evening people assemble in the parlor, in the daytime they wander through the park for the treatment, which, added to this life that is so well-filled and yet so empty, wholly engages one's time. The lively hour is after breakfast, when people group around little tables under the large linden-trees at the entrance of the garden to take coffee. It is the hour of arrivals and departures: people are shaking hands and bidding farewell around the stage, and the servants at the hotel hurry to and fro, their eyes bright with the famous Savoyard glitter. People who hardly know each other embrace, handkerchiefs are waving, and bells ringing; then the heavy, swaying vehicle disappears through the narrow roads, half-way down the hill, and the names and faces which for a moment have made part of the common life, and were unknown yesterday, will be forgotten to-morrow.

"Others arrive, and fall into their places. I imagine that such is the monotony of steamers, with new faces at every landing. All this commotion amuses me; but our dear mamma is very sad and very thoughtful, in spite of the smile she puts on when I look at her. I suppose that every detail of our life brings her a painful memory, and calls up sad images. She saw so many of these invalids during the year that she accompanied our dying brother from place to place, through plains, over mountains, or under the pines at the seashore, with her hopes always disappointed, and at last being obliged to crown her martyrdom with resignation. Certainly Jarras ought to have avoided reminding her of her sorrows; for I am not ill: I cough hardly at all; and with the exception of my ugly hoarseness, which gives me the voice of a green-pea vender on the street, I have never been so well. I have

the appetite of a fiend, imagine it, — a terrible appetite, which makes it impossible to wait for meals a moment. Yesterday, after a breakfast of thirty dishes, with a bill of fare more varied than the Chinese alphabet, I saw a woman displaying strawberries before her door, and suddenly a fit of hunger took me. Two bowls, my dear, two bowls of those big, fresh strawberries, ‘the fruit of the country,’ as our waiter says ! That describes the condition of my stomach. Never mind, my darling : how fortunate it is that neither you nor I have taken the malady of that poor brother whom I hardly knew, and whose pinched features and look of discouragement, in his portrait in our parents’ room, I find here again on other faces. What an original this physician, the famous Bouchereau, is, who used to attend him ! The other day mamma wished to present me to him : and in order to secure a consultation we roamed around the park in pursuit of the grand old man with a rough, hard face ; but he was very closely surrounded by the physicians of Arvillard, who were listening to him with the humility of scholars. Then we waited for him at the door of the inhaling-room ; but it was time wasted. Our man began to walk away as if he wished to escape us. With mamma, you know, one does not walk very quickly ; and we missed him again. Finally, yesterday morning Fanny went in our behalf to request her governess to ask if he would receive us. He answered that he came to this watering-place for his health, and not to give consultations. You see what a boor he is. Really, I never saw any one so pale, so wax-like : father is a man of very bright complexion in comparison. He lives only on milk, and never goes down to the dining-room, and less frequently to the parlor. Our frisky little doctor, whom I call *M.* *Just what you need,*

asserts that Dr. Bouchereau has a very dangerous heart-trouble, and that the waters of Arvillard have kept him alive three years. 'Just what you need, just what you need,' is all one hears from this stuttering, droll, vain, talkative little man, who flies around our room in the morning. 'Doctor, I do not sleep: I think the treatment excites me.' — 'Just what you need.' — 'Doctor, I am sleepy all the time: I think it must be the waters.' — 'Just what you need.'

"What he needs more than all is to end his round as quickly as possible, so that he may be at his consultation office at ten o'clock, in the little bandbox where people are packed from the lowest steps on the sidewalk to the staircase. So he does not loiter, but scribbles off a recipe without ceasing his capering and jumping about like a bather getting up a re-action.

"Oh, that re-action! That is another occupation. I, who take neither baths nor shower-baths, have no re-action to attend to; but I sometimes remain a quarter of an hour under the linden-trees in the park, watching the coming and going of all these people who walk with long, regular steps, deep in thought, and pass each other without saying a word. My old gentleman in the inhaling-room, the one who keeps his eye on the spring, brings his usual punctuality and conscientiousness to this exercise. At the entrance to the walk he stops, closes his white umbrella, turns down his coat-collar, looks at his watch, and is on his way, holding his elbows in, and walking stiffly, — one, two; one, two, — as far as a great streak of pale light thrown across the path where a tree is missing. He goes no farther, raises his arms three times, as if he were practising dumb-bells, then returns at the same pace, brandishes dumb-bells again, and

continues this fifteen times in succession. I imagine that the quarters of the nervous people at Charenton must look something like my path at eleven o'clock."

"Aug. 6.

"Then it is true that Numa is coming to see us. Oh, how glad I am! how glad I am! Your letter came by the mail which is distributed in the office of the hotel. It is a solemn moment, and is decisive in coloring the rest of the day. The office is full; and people range themselves in a half-circle around the stout Mme. Laugeron, who looks very dignified in her blue flannel wrapper, while in the authoritative, rather affected voice of an ancient maid of honor, she reads the addresses on the many-colored envelopes. Each person steps forward on being called; and I must tell you that each one has a certain pride in receiving a large mail. In this perpetual friction of vanity and folly, in what does one not have pride? To think that I have reached the condition of feeling proud of my two hours' inhaling! 'M. le Prince d'Anhalt, M. Vasseur, M. Vasseur, Mlle. Le Quesnoy, Mlle. Le Quesnoy.' What a disappointment! It is only my fashion-magazine. I look to see if there is nothing more for me, and run off with your dear letter, to a bench shut in by large hazel-nut trees at the end of the garden.

"It is my bench in the corner where I isolate myself to dream, and weave my romances; for, astonishing to say, in order to invent and develop well, according to the rules of M. Baudouy, I do not need large horizons. When they are too large I am lost, — my ideas become scattered, and fly away. The only annoyance near my bench is a swing where that little Bachellery passes half of her days being hurled into space by a young man with

'elasticity.' I think he must have elasticity, to push her thus for hours. And she gives baby-like cries, and swift *roulades*. 'Higher still!' Heavens, how that girl irritates me! I wish the swing would send her into the clouds, and she would never come down again. I am so comfortable out of the way here on my bench when she is not near. I enjoyed reading your letter, and cried with delight at the postscript.

"Oh, blessed be Chambéry, and its new lyceum, and the laying of the corner-stone, which brings the Minister of Public Instruction into our region! He will find this a very pleasant place in which to prepare his speech, either when walking in the 're-action' path,—come now, good, a joke,—or under my hazel-nuts if Mlle. Bachellery does not frighten them away. I get along so well with my dear Numa, he is so lively and so gay. How we will talk about our Rosalie, and of the serious reason that prevents her from travelling just now! Ah, heavens, it is a secret! And mamma made me swear so solemnly! She is also glad to see dear Numa again. She suddenly lost all her timidity and modesty, and majestically entered the hotel-office to engage an apartment for her son-in-law the minister. You should have seen our landlady's face when she heard the news.

"'What? Ladies, you are—you were'—

"'We were, we are'—

"Her broad face became purple and flame-colored, like the palette of impressionists, as did those of M. Laugeron and all the servants. Since our arrival we have asked in vain for an extra candle, and now there are five on the mantle-piece. Numa will be well served, I assure you, and have good rooms. They will give him the first story, belonging to Prince d'Anhalt, who will leave in

three days. It seems that the waters of Arvillard are fatal to the princess, and the little doctor himself thinks that she should leave at once. That is what must be done ; for, if any thing should happen, the Alpes Dauphinoises would never recover from it.

“ It is pitiful to see the haste attending the departure of these unfortunate persons, and how people hurry them away, through that magnetic hostility which would have the place one fills vacated when one is in the way. Poor Princess d’Anhalt, who was so *fêted* on her arrival ! For a trifle they would send her away between two *gendarmes* to the boundaries of the Department.

“ Such is the hospitality of watering-places. *Après*, where is Bompard ? You do not tell me whether he is to start also. Dangerous Bompard ! If he comes, I am capable of flying away with him to some glacier. What developments we would find near the summit ! I am laughing, I am so happy. And I inhale, inhale ever so much, though rather embarrassed by the presence of Bouchereau, who has just entered and seated himself two seats from me.

“ What a hard look that man has ! With his hands on the knob of his cane, and his chin resting on them, he speaks in a loud tone, looking straight ahead, without addressing any one. Ought I to apply to myself what he says about the imprudence of bathers, about their dresses of light batiste, and the folly of going out after dinner when the evenings are fatally cool ? Wicked man ! One would believe that he knows that I am to collect this evening at the church of Arvillard for the work of the Propagation. Father Olivieri will speak in the pulpit about his mission to Thibet, and of his captivity and martyrdom, and Mlle. Bachellery will sing the Ave-Maria

by Gounod. We shall have a lively time returning through all the little dark streets with lanterns, like a real retreat by torch-light. If it is a consultation that M. Bouchereau is giving me, I do not wish it, for it is too late. In the first place, sir, I have *carte blanche* from my little doctor, who is much more amiable than you, and who even permitted me to waltz around once in the *salon* to finish the evening. Oh ! only once ! And, when I dance a little too much, every one is after me. People do not know how strong I am, with my tall spindle figure, and that a Parisian lady is never ill from too much dancing. 'Take care, do not fatigue yourself too much,' says one ; another brings me my shawl ; and some one else closes the windows on my back for fear that I may take cold. But the most concerned is the young man who has so much 'elasticity,' because he thinks I have so very much more than his sister. That is easy to explain, poor girl ! Between ourselves, I think that this young gentleman, despairing at Alice Bachellery's coldness, has fallen back on me, and is paying me court. But alas ! it is a waste of efforts : my heart is captivated, it belongs to Bompard. Well, no, it is not Bompard — as you suspect, it is not Bompard — who is the hero of my romance. It is — it is — Ah ! dear me, my hour has gone. I will tell you another day, mademoiselle *refrèjon*."

CHAPTER XII.

A WATERING-PLACE (*continued*).

ON the morning that the "Bather's Journal" announced that his Excellency the Minister of Public Instruction, with his *attaché* Bompard and their suite, had stopped at the Alpes Dauphinoises, the dismay in the hotels in the vicinity was great. The Laita had been keeping a Catholic archbishop from Geneva for two days to bring him out at the right moment, as well as a counsellor-general from the Isère, an associate-judge from Tahiti, and an architect from Boston — in short, a whole batch; La Chevette also expected a deputy and family from the Rhône. But the deputy and associate-judge disappeared, swept away and lost in the wake of the brilliant light that followed Numa Roumestan everywhere. People talked and thought of no one but him, and made every excuse to obtain admittance into the Alpes Dauphinoises, and to pass by the small parlor on the ground-floor, opening into the garden, where the minister ate his meals in the company of the ladies and his *attaché*. They tried to see him play the game of bowls, so dear to the Southerner, with Father Olivieri of the Missions, a holy and heavily bearded man, who by living among the savages had learned their ways, and who uttered formidable cries when aiming, firing, and brandishing the balls above his head like a tomahawk. The minister's handsome face and frank manners, and above

all his sympathy for the poor, won every heart. The day after his arrival, the two waiters who served on the first story told at the office that the minister intended to take them to Paris to be in his employ. As they were good servants, Mme. Laugeron resented it ; but did not let his Excellency see it, as his stay was so great an honor to her hotel. The prefect and rector came from Grenoble to ceremoniously present their homage to Roumestan. The abbé of La Grande-Chartreuse, — in whose behalf he pleaded against the Prémontrés and their cordial, — sent him, with great ceremony, a case of extra-fine wines. Finally, the prefect of Chambéry came to receive his orders for the ceremony of laying the cornerstone of the new lyceum, which was an opportunity for a written address, and a revolution in the customs of the University. But the minister asked for a little respite : his labors in the session had fatigued him ; and he wished to recover his breath, and find repose with his relatives, and prepare at his leisure the speech for Chambéry, as it would have considerable weight. The prefect understood this, asking only to be notified forty-eight hours in advance, that he might be able to give the necessary *éclat* to the ceremonies. The stone had waited two months, and could wait even longer the pleasure of the illustrious orator.

In reality, what kept Roumestan at Arviliard was neither the need of rest nor the leisure which might be required by so wonderful an improviser, on whom time and reflection had the effect of dampness on phosphorus. It was the presence of Alice Bachellery. After five months' passionate flirtation, Numa had no farther advanced with his "little one" than on the day of their first rendezvous. He frequented her house, enjoyed the skilfully made soup

of M. Bachellery, the ditties of the former director of the Folies-Bordelaises, and recognized the slight favors by a shower of presents, bouquets, admission-cards to ministerial boxes, the *séances* of the Institute and Chamber, and even by the conferring of the Academy prize to the songwriter ; but nothing helped on his suit. However, he was not one of those novices who fish at any hour, without first having tried the water and made sure of his bait. Only he had to deal with a most delicate and subtle fish, which played with his precautions, bit at the bait, sometimes pretended to be caught, and, suddenly giving a pull, escaped, leaving his mouth parched with desire, and his heart lashed by the splashing of its supple, undulating, tempting form. There is nothing more enervating than this game ; but Numa could bring it to an end only by giving the little one what she asked for, — an engagement as first singer at the Opéra for five years, with a large salary, a prominent situation, and the whole signed and sealed, meaning something more than a mere shake of the hands and the “agreed” of Cardaillac. She did not believe in it more than in the “I assure you it is just the same as if you had it,” with which Roumestan for five months had tried to lure her.

The latter found himself between two exigencies. “Yes,” said Cardaillac, “if you renew my lease.” Now it was burned and at an end, and his presence at the head of the principal opera-house would be a scandal and a reproach and a suspicious inheritance from the imperial administration. The press would surely protest against the player who had failed three times, and who could not wear his official cross, and against the cynical showman who shamelessly wasted the public funds. Weary at last of not being able to allow herself to be caught, Alice broke the line, and escaped, dragging the net with her.

One day the minister, arriving at the Bachellerys', found the house empty with the exception of the father, who, to console him, sang his last refrain : —

“Donne-moi d'quoi q't'as, t'auras d'quoi qu'j'ai.”

After this he waited patiently a month, then again visited the fertile song-writer, who wished to sing him his new song, —

“Quand le saucisson va, tout va.”

and told him that the ladies, finding themselves charmingly situated at the watering-place, intended to prolong their stay. It was then that Roumestan bethought him that they were waiting for him to lay the corner-stone in the lyceum at Chambéry, — a promise made in the air, and which probably would have remained there if Chambéry had not been next to Arvillard, where, by a providential chance, Jarras, the physician and friend of the minister, had just sent Mlle. Le Quesnoy.

They met in the garden of the hotel just after his arrival. She was very much surprised at seeing him, as if that very morning she had not read the boastful announcement in the “Bather's Journal,” and as if for a week the whole valley, through the thousand voices of its forests, fountains, and innumerable echoes, had not announced the coming of his Excellency.

“Are you here?”

And he, with his stiff, ministerial, and grand manner, answered, —

“I have come to see my sister-in-law.”

He was astonished, however, to find Mlle. Bachellery still at Arvillard. He thought she left long ago.

“Dear me ! I must take care of myself, since Cardail-lac pretends that my voice is in a bad condition.”

Thereupon, with a little Parisian salute with the tips of her lashes, she went away singing a light *roulade*, — a pretty warble like that of a lark which one hears long after the bird is out of sight. Only from that day she changed her style. She was no longer the precocious child, gambolling around the hotel, roqueting M. Paul, swinging, and playing innocent games, amusing herself with the little ones only, and disarming the sternest mammas and most gloomy ecclesiastics by the innocence of her laughter and her punctuality at service. Alice Bachellery appeared as the *diva* of the Bouffes, the pretty, free, and lively baker's boy, surrounded by young fops who improvised *fêtes*, parties, and suppers, which the mother, who was always present, could not fully defend from evil interpretations.

Every morning a basket-phaeton, with a white awning bordered with fringe, stood at the steps an hour until these ladies came down in light dresses ; while a lively riding party, representing all the free life of the young men of the Alpes Dauphinoises and of the neighboring hotels, pawed around them. They were the associate judge, the American architect, and, in particular, the young man with "elasticity," whom the *diva* no longer seemed to drive to despair with her innocent, childish ways.

In a carriage piled up with cloaks for the return, and with a big basket of provisions on its box, they crossed the country at a full trot, *en route* for the Chartreuse of St. Hugon. They spent three hours on the mountain among the pitfalls of the peaks, on a level with the tops of the dark pine-trees which bent over precipices, and torrents white with foam ; or they went in the direction of Brame-farine, where they breakfasted on mountain-cheese, watered with a little wine, which made the Alps

and Mont Blanc, the wonderful horizon of ice, the blue crests high above, and the little lakes, which were clear patches at the foot of the rocks, like broken bits of sky, swim before their eyes. They descended in a mountain sledge made of foliage, and without a back, and were obliged to hold on to the branches as they plunged headlong down the declivity. They were drawn by a mountaineer, who went straight on over the velvety pasture-land, the pebbly bed of dried torrents, and crossed with the same speed the tracts of rock, or the sharp turns of a brook, leaving them finally at the bottom, dazzled, bruised, and suffocated, their whole bodies shaken and eyes whirling, and feeling as if they had experienced the most frightful earthquake.

And the day did not close until the whole party were drenched on the road in a mountain-storm of lightning and hail, which frightened the horses, and made the landscape look like a tragic scene in the drama. It was a sensational return, with little Bachellery on the box, in a man's overcoat, and with a chicken-wing in her hat, while she held the reins, and slapped them to keep herself warm. When she at last alighted, she recounted the dangers of the excursion spiritedly and thrillingly, with eyes brilliant from the lively re-action of her youth, from a shiver of fear, and the cold rain-storm.

She might, at least, have felt the need of a good sound sleep, such as a mountain excursion gives one: but no, in the room of those women a continuous revelry of laughter, singing, and popping of corks was kept up until morning; eatables were carried up at unwonted hours, and tables were rolled up for *baccarat* over the minister's head, his apartment being next beneath.

Several times he complained to Mme. Laugeron, who

was divided between her desire to be agreeable to his Excellency, and the fear of displeasing such profitable patrons. Further, has any one the right to be very exacting in these bathing hotels, that are always in commotion on account of departures and arrivals in the middle of the night, and on account of the noise of trunks being dragged along, of heavy boots, iron-tipped walking-sticks of mountain tourists, who are equipping themselves before daybreak, and of the coughing fits of the invalids, their horrible, incessant, racking coughs, which have something of a death-rattle, sob, and the hoarse crow of a cock?

The heavy, sleepless July nights which Roumestán passed in feverish wakefulness, turning and tossing in his bed with troublesome thoughts, while the clear laughter of his neighbor, broken by brilliant passages and trills, rang out over his head, might have been spent in the preparation of his speech for Chambéry; but he was too greatly agitated, too furious, from his efforts to restrain himself from going up stairs and kicking out the young man with elasticity, the American, and that infamous associate-judge who was a disgrace to the French magistracy in the colonies, and from seizing by her turtle throat, swollen with *roulades*, that wicked little wretch, and saying to her once for all, "Will you soon quit making me suffer like this?" Then, to quiet himself, and drive away these visions, and others still more vivid and painful, he lighted his candle, called Bompard, his confidant and echo, who was sleeping in the next room, always ready on call, and talked to him about the little one. It was for this he brought him, taking him not without difficulty from his artificial incubator. Bompard consoled himself by talking about his business to Father

Olivieri, who was thoroughly familiar with the raising of ostriches, having lived in Cape Town a long while. The stories of the holy father, his travels and martyrdom, and the various ways in which he had been tortured in different countries, his robust buccaneer's body having been burned, sawed, and run over, an illustration of the refinements of human cruelty, together with the fresh fan of silky, brilliant feathers he dreamed of, interested the imaginative Bompard much more than the story of the little Bachellery ; but he was so well trained to his profession of follower, that, even at that hour, Numa found him ready to wait upon him, and grow indignant when he himself did, giving to his noble face — beneath a nightcap which stood up in peaks — expressions of anger, irony, or grief, according as Numa spoke of the false eyelashes of the artful little one of sixteen, who ought to be twenty-four, or of the immorality of the mother taking part in the scandalous orgies. Finally, when Roumestan, having declaimed and gesticulated well, bared the weakness of his loving heart, and extinguished his candle, saying, "Come, let us try to sleep," Bompard profited by the darkness to say to him before going to bed, —

"If I were in your place, I know what I should do."

"What?"

"I should renew the engagement with Cardaillac."

"Never!"

And he gave a violent plunge under the bed-clothes, to shut out the racket overhead.

One afternoon, at the music-hour, the hour for coquetry and talk in a watering-place, while all the bathers, crowded before the establishment as on the deck of a ship, were going and coming, walking round and round, or taking a seat on the chairs placed close together in

three rows, the minister, to avoid Mlle. Bachellery, whom he saw coming, in a dazzling blue and red toilet, escorted by her staff, hurried away into a deserted path. He was sitting alone on the corner of a bench, his thoughts influenced by the melancholy of the hour, and by the distant music, and was mechanically stirring with the end of his umbrella the red patches of light which the sunset cast upon the path, when a shadow slowly passing between him and the sun made him raise his eyes.

It was Bouchereau, the celebrated physician, looking very pale and bloated, and dragging his feet along. They knew each other, as all Parisians do in certain high circles of society. Bouchereau, who had not been out for several days, happened to feel in good humor. He seated himself, and they talked.

"So you are ill, doctor?"

"Very ill," said the latter with his usual manner of a wild boar: "an hereditary malady, a hypertrophy of the heart. My mother and my sisters died of it. Only I shall not last so long as they, on account of my dreadful profession: I have only one or two years at most."

There was nothing but useless commonplace answers to give this grand *savant*, this infallible judge of maladies, who talked of his death with quiet assurance. Roumestan understood him, and remained silent, thinking that there were sorrows even more serious than his. Bouchereau continued without looking at him, with that vague look and implacable succession of ideas which the habit of the desk and the class gives a professor, —

"Because we physicians have a certain manner, people think we feel nothing, and that in the sick person we care only for the malady, and never for the human and suffering being. It is a great error. I have seen my teacher

Dupuytren, who, however, passed for a man hard as leather, weep bitterly in the presence of a poor little diphtheretic child, who said softly that he couldn't bear to die ; and the heart-rending appeals of maternal anguish, the passionate hands clutching your arms, with the cry, 'My child ! Save my child !' And the fathers who harden themselves to say to you in a very manly voice with big tears down their cheeks, 'You will bring him through, won't you, doctor?' It is in vain that one inures one's self : this despair pierces your heart ; and that is a fine thing for one when one's heart is already out of order. Forty years of practice, and I am becoming more sensitive every day. It is my patients who have killed me. I am dying on account of the sufferings of others."

"But I thought that you no longer gave consultations, doctor," said the minister much moved.

"Oh, no ! I do not. I shall never give them again to any one. If I were to see a man fall there before me, I should not even stoop down to him. You must know that my malady, contracted from those which others suffer, becomes at last revolting. I, too, wish to live. There is nothing like life."

A brightness came over his deathly pallor ; and his nose, that was pinched and betokened ill-health, breathed in the light air which was impregnated with warm aromas, and vibrated with sounds and the cries of birds. He resumed with a touching sigh, —

"I practise no longer, but I am still the physician : I preserve the fatal gift of diagnosing, that horrible second sight into the latent symptoms, the suffering that one wishes to be silent about, which, hardly observed in the person passing, in the being who walks, speaks, and acts

in full strength, shows me the dying person and the lifeless body of to-morrow, as clearly as I see the syncope approaching in which I shall remain, and the last swoon from which nothing can awaken me."

"It is frightful," murmured Numa, who felt himself grow pale and cowardly before disease and death, like all Southerners who madly cling to life; and he turned away from the dreaded *savant*, and no longer dared to face him, lest he should read the signs of approaching death in his face.

"Ah! how the terrible diagnosis which all envy me saddens me, and spoils what little life remains! I am acquainted with a poor woman here whose son died ten or twelve years ago of laryngeal phthisis. I saw him twice, and was the only one of them all to point out the gravity of the malady. To-day I again find the mother with her young daughter; and I confess that the presence of these unfortunate women takes away the comfort of my stay at the springs, and does me more harm than the treatment will do me good. They follow and wish to consult me, and I absolutely refuse. There is no need of examining that child to decide against her. It was sufficient to have seen her the other day voraciously eating a bowl of strawberries, to have looked at her when inhaling with her hand on her knees, a slender hand with arching nails, which turned away from the fingers as if about to part from them. She has her brother's phthisis, and she will die before a year. But let others tell her. I have given enough of such knife-cuts that rebound against me. I will do so no more."

Roumestan had arisen very much alarmed.

"Do you know the names of those ladies, doctor?"

“No : they sent me their card, but I would not even look at it. I only know that they are at our hotel.”

Then suddenly looking towards the end of the path, he cried, —

“Ah ! my God, there they are ! I must run !”

CHAPTER XIII.

A WATERING-PLACE (*continued*).

JUST beyond, on the green circle where the last measures of music were heard, there was a movement of umbrellas and gay toilets among the trees at the first sounds of the dinner-bell.

The ladies were leaving an animated, busily talking group ; Hortense looking tall and slender in the light, in a toilet of muslin and valenciennes, with a hat trimmed with roses, and in her hand a bouquet of those same roses bought in the park.

"With whom were you talking, Numa? He looked like Dr. Bouchereau," she asked, standing before him, radiant and with so favorable a light of happy youth that the mother herself began to lose her fears, while a little of her daughter's communicative gayety was reflected on her aged face.

"Yes, it was Bouchereau who was telling me his troubles. He is very low, poor man." And as Numa looked at her he became re-assured. "The man is crazy," he said : "it is not possible ; it is his own death which he is constantly thinking of, and whose symptoms he sees everywhere."

At that moment Bompard appeared, walking very quickly, and waving a newspaper.

"What is it?" asked the minister.

"Great news ! The tambourinist has made a *début*."

Hortense murmured, "At last !" and Numa was beaming.

"It was a success, was it not?"

"You think so? I have not read the article; but it fills three columns on the first page of 'The Messenger.'"

"One more that I have created," said the minister, who had seated himself with his hands in his vest: "read it to us."

Mme. Le Quesnoy remarking that the dinner-bell had rung, Hortense quickly replied that it was only the first bell; and, leaning her cheek on her hand in a pretty *pose* of smiling attention, she listened.

"Is it to the Minister of Fine Arts, or to the Director of the Opera, that the Parisian public owe the queer mystification of which it was the victim last evening?"

All trembled excepting Bompard, who, in his delight at being the bearer of good news, and lulled by the ring of his sentence, which he read without understanding it, looked at each in turn very much surprised at their astonishment.

"Go on," said Numa: "go on."

"Certainly it is M. Roumestan whom we hold responsible. It is he who has brought us this odd and rustic galoubet, this goat-herd's reedpipe" —

"There are some very wicked persons," interrupted the young girl, turning pale under her roses. The reader continued, his eyes wide open at the enormities he saw coming.

— "by which our Academy has been made to resemble the evening of the return from the fair at St. Cloud; and truly it needed a famous galoubet to believe that Paris" —

The minister tore the paper from his hands.

"You are not going to read us that nonsense to the end, I hope. It is quite enough to have brought it to us."

He ran over the article with the quick look of a public man accustomed to the invectives of the press. "*A provincial minister, a fine player of entrechats. Valmajour's Roumestan! hiss the minister, and smash the tambourine.*" He had enough of it, and hid the wicked sheet in the depths of his pocket, then rose, giving vent to the anger which swelled his face, and saying, as he took Mme. Le Quesnoy's arm, "Come to dinner, mamma: this will teach me not to trouble myself about a pack of worthless people."

The four walked side by side, Hortense with her eyes on the ground in consternation. "It refers to an artist of great talent," she said, trying to steady the rather veiled timbre of her voice: "you must not make him responsible for the injustice of the public, and the irony of the papers."

Roumestan stopped. "Talent, talent, *bé, oui*, I do not deny; but *too exotic*;" and, raising his umbrella, he said, "Let us be careful about the South, little sister, let us be careful about the South. Do not let us abuse it: Paris would grow tired of it."

He resumed his way with measured steps, quiet and cold as an inhabitant of Copenhagen; and the silence was disturbed only by the crunching of gravel under his steps, which, in certain circumstances, seems to represent anger, or a dream that is being crushed under foot. When they reached the hotel, from which through the ten windows of its vast dining-room came the clatter of spoons and plates in the hands of the hungry guests, Hortense stopped, and, raising her head, said, —

"Then you intend to abandon that poor boy?"

"What can be done? There is no use of trying longer, as Paris is not in his favor."

With an indignant, almost scornful look, she retorted,

"What you say is frightful. Well, I am prouder than you, and faithful to my enthusiasms."

Saying which, she went up the hotel steps with two bounds.

"Hortense, the second bell has rung."

"Yes, yes, I know; I am coming right down;" and she ran up to her room, and locked herself in, that she might not be disturbed. From her open desk, one of those dainty trifles by means of which a Parisian lady invests even a hotel-room with her personality, she took a photograph which she had taken in the Arles fichu and ribbons, and wrote a line at the bottom of it, to which she attached her signature. While she was adding the address a clock in a church at Arvillard, in the violet shadow of the valley, struck as if to give solemnity to her act.

Six o'clock.

A mist arose from the torrent, floating away in snowy flakes. The amphitheatre of forests and mountains, and the luminous silver rays of the glacier in the rosy glow of evening, were noted by her, with the slightest details of that silent, restful moment, as one marks an especial date on the calendar, or underlines in a book the passage that moved one most.

Thinking aloud, she said, —

"It is my life, my whole life, that I am pledging this moment." And she took for her witnesses the solemn evening hour, the majesty of nature, and the impressive air of meditation of every thing around her.

It was her whole life that she pledged. Poor child, if she had known how brief it was !

A few days later the Le Quesnoy ladies left the hotel, the treatment of Hortense being ended. Her mother, although re-assured by her child's more healthful look, and what the little doctor said to her about the miracle performed by the nymph of the springs, was in haste to end her stay, whose slightest details recalled her former martyrdom.

"What will you do, Numa?"

Oh ! he intended to remain a week or two longer to continue a little more treatment, and profit by the quiet their departure would give him to write his famous speech. It would make a great stir, and they would hear of it in Paris. But Le Quesnoy would not be pleased.

When Hortense was ready to depart, happy as she felt at returning home to see again the dear ones whom distance rendered dearer still, for she had imagination even in her heart, she felt sad at leaving this beautiful country, and the guests at the hotel, the friends of three weeks, to whom she did not know she was so much attached. Ah, loving natures ! how you yield yourself to others, how every thing takes possession of you, and what grief it causes you to break the invisible, sensitive ties ! They had been very kind and attentive to her ; and at the last hour many kind faces pressed around the carriage, and held out their hands to her. Young girls kissed her, sighing, "Oh, it will be so dull without you !" They promised to write to each other, and exchanged souvenirs and fragrant boxes, and pearl paper-cutters with the inscription "Arvillard, 1876," on a reflection of the lakes in blue. And, while M. Laugeron slipped into her bag a flask of superfine Chartreuse, she looked up, and saw

at the window of her room the woman who waited upon her, a native of the mountains, wiping her eyes with a large dingy handkerchief; and a hollow voice whispered in her ear, "Elasticity, mademoiselle; always have elasticity," — her friend the consumptive, who, having climbed the axletree, was sending her a farewell look from two hollow, burning eyes that sparkled with energy and will, and also a little emotion. "Oh, the kind people, the kind people!" thought Hortense, not daring to speak for fear of weeping.

"Farewell, farewell all!"

The minister, who accompanied the ladies to the station, seated himself opposite them. The whip snaps, and the bells jingle, when suddenly Hortense cries, "My sun-umbrella!" She had it only a moment ago. Twenty persons spring forward. "The umbrella, the umbrella!" Was it in the chamber? No, nor in the *salon*. Doors slam, and the hotel was in a commotion from top to bottom.

"Do not look for it. I know where it is;" and the young girl, who at all times was sprightly, jumped from the carriage, and ran into the garden to the nut-trees, where that very morning she had added a few more chapters to the romance that was under way in her little imaginative head. The umbrella was there across the bench, something reminding one of herself lying in her favorite place. What delightful hours she had passed in this bright, leafy corner, and what confidences had been carried away by the bees and butterflies! No doubt she would never return there again; and this thought made her heart heavy, and made her tarry. Even the slow, grating noise of the swing she now thought charming.

"Keep still: you bother me."

It was the voice of Mlle. Bachellery, who, furious at being neglected on account of this departure, and believing herself alone with her mother, was speaking to her in her habitual language. Hortense thought of the filial, coaxing ways that had so often wearied her, and laughed to herself as she returned to the carriage, when, at the turning of a path, she found herself face to face with Bouchereau. She moved aside, but he held her by the arm.

"So you are to leave us, my child?"

"Yes, sir."

She hardly knew what to answer, feeling confused at meeting him, and at his speaking to her for the first time. Then he took both her hands in his, and held her thus before him with arms extended, and looked at her searchingly with his sharp eyes under their white, bushy eyebrows.

Then his lips and arms trembled, and a deep purple flush succeeded the pallor of his face.

"There, farewell: I wish you a pleasant journey." And without another word he drew her to his bosom with the tenderness of a grandfather, and ran away with both hands pressed to his heart, that was throbbing wildly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPEECH AT CHAMBÉRY.

“Non, non, je me fais hironde-e-elle,
Et je m’envo-o-le à tire d’ai-ai-le.”

THE little Bachellery, dressed in a fancy cloak with a blue-silk hood to match a little cap around which was wound a large gauze veil, was standing before her mirror, buttoning her last glove, and singing this refrain in a shrill voice which that morning sounded clear and pleasant. Prepared for an excursion, her gay little person had a pleasant odor of a fresh toilet and a new costume in the strictest taste, and which formed a contrast to the untidiness of her room, where the remnants of a supper were strewn over the table with counters, cards, and candles, close to the disordered bed, and a large bathing-tub full of the dazzling milk whey of Arvillard, which was a sovereign remedy for quieting the nerves, and rendering the skin of bathers like satin. Below, the basket-phaeton was waiting for her, and an escort of young men were moving to and fro before the steps.

As she was finishing her toilet, a knock was heard at the door. As she called out, “Come in,” Roumestan entered, and with great emotion handed her a large envelope.

“Here it is, mademoiselle. Oh ! read it, read it !”

It was a five-years’ engagement at the Opéra, with the desired salary, first position, and all. And when she had

deciphered it, article by article, coldly and deliberately, even to Cardaillac's clumsy signature, then, and only then, did she move a step towards the minister, and raising her veil, which was drawn down as a protection from the dust on the journey, she put up her rosy face to him.

"You are good. I love you."

It needed no more to make the public man forget all the annoyance the engagement would cause him. He restrained himself, however, and stood up straight, frowning, and cold as a rock.

"Now I have kept my word, I will retire. I do not wish to disturb your party."

"My party? Ah! yes, it is true. We are going to Château-Bayard." And, throwing both arms around his neck, she said coaxingly, "You will come with us? Oh! yes, yes!"

Her wide pencilled eyebrows grazed his face; and she even bit his statuesque chin, though not very hard, with the edge of her baby teeth.

"With those young men? Why, it is impossible. You can't mean it."

"I don't care for those young men. I will send them away. Mamma, go and tell them — oh! they are used to it. Do you hear, mamma?"

"I am going," said Mme. Bachellery, who was to be seen in the next room with her foot on a chair, trying to get very narrow cloth boots over her red stockings. She made the minister her fine bow of the Folies-Bordelaises, and hastened down to send the gentlemen away.

"Keep a horse for Bompard. He will come with us," called out the little one. And Numa, touched by this attention, tasted the delicious joy of having this pretty girl at his side, and listening to all these dashing young

men as they walked away with heads hung down, though the hoofs of their horses had often trodden on his heart as they pranced around little Bachellery. She gave a long, lingering kiss, with a smile that promised every thing ; then she disengaged herself.

“Go and dress quickly,” she said. “I long to be off.”

There was a stir of curiosity in the hotel, and a movement behind the blinds, when it was known that the minister was of the party for Château-Bayard, when his broad white vest and his beaming Roman face, shaded by his Panama, were seen in the basket-phaeton, opposite the singer. After all, as Father Olivieri said, who had become used to a good deal since his travels, what harm was there in it? Would not the mother accompany them? and would not a visit to the Château-Bayard, an historical building, be included in the duties of a minister? Let us not be so intolerant towards men who give their lives in the defence of good doctrines and our holy religion.

“Bompard does not come : what is he doing?” murmured Roumestan, who was impatient at waiting there before the hotel, under the fire of scrutinizing eyes, in spite of the canopy of the carriage. At a window on the first story something extraordinary, white, round, and of foreign appearance, was seen ; and it cried, with the well-known accent of the ancient chief of the Tcherkesses, “Go on ahead. I will join you.”

As if they waited only for this signal, the two mules, with low withers but a firm step, crossed the park with three bounds, and passed the bathing establishment.

“Look out ! Look out !”

The frightened bathers and the chair-bearers stood quickly aside, and the waiting-women, with the large pockets of their aprons full of change and colored

tickets, appeared at the entrance of the galleries ; the shampooers, naked as Bedouins under their woollen coverings, showed themselves to the waist on the staircase of the vapor bath-room ; the blue curtains in the inhalation rooms were pulled up, for people wished to see the minister and the singer pass ; but they are already far away, driving at full speed down the steep labyrinth of the dark little streets of Arvillard, over the sharp pebbles, veined with sulphur and fire, over which the carriage bounded, sending out sparks, and shaking the low houses, which are full of lepers, and bringing to the windows filled with notices, and to the threshold of stores where are walking-sticks, parasols, mountain-passes, calcareous stones, minerals, crystals, and other bait for bathers, heads that bow and foreheads that are uncovered at sight of the minister.

Even those afflicted with goitre recognize him, and salute the Grand Master of the University of France with their meaningless hoarse laugh ; while the ladies, feeling very proud, hold themselves erect and dignified opposite him, appreciating the honor paid them. They are not at their ease until out of that part of the country, on the beautiful road to Pontcharra, where the mules stop to take breath at the foot of the tower of Treuil, which Bompard appointed for the *rendezvous*.

The moments go by, and no Bompard. They knew he was a good rider, he so often boasted of it. They are astonished and annoyed, — Numa, in particular, who is impatient to be far away on that smooth white road, which appears endless, in order to get on in the journey which lies before him like a life full of hope and adventure. Finally, from a whirlwind of dust in which a terrified voice pants, "Ho ! la ; ho ! la," the head of Bom-

pard is put forth, decked with one of those cork caps covered with white linen, with the vague outline of a diver's suit, in use in the Indo-English army, and which the Southerner has imported with the intention of making his journey important and dramatic, giving the latter to believe that he was going to Bombay or Calcutta.

"Come on, then, laggard."

Bompard raised his head with a tragic air. Evidently much had occurred on his departure, and the Tcherkesse must have given the people of the hotel a sad idea of his powers of equilibrium; for broad streaks of dust soiled his sleeves and back. "Wretched horse," he said, bowing to the ladies, while the basket-wagon shook, "wretched horse, but I put him at a trot."

So much of a trot that now the strange beast would not go on, but kept stamping and turning round like a sick cat, in spite of the efforts of his rider. The carriage was already far away. "Are you coming, Bompard?"

"Go on, I will join you," he shouted again, in his deepest and most beautiful *Marseillaise* tones; then he made a despairing gesture, and was seen flying off towards Arvillard in a succession of furious kicks. They all said, "he must have forgotten something," and thought no more about him.

The road, which was wide and belonged to France, wound round the heights. Along it at intervals were walnut-trees, on the left forests of chestnut and pine, and in terraces on the right, of large declivities, sloping off as far as eye could see, to where in the background villages were clustered in the valleys, vineyards, fields of wheat and maize, mulberry and almond trees, and a dazzling carpet of broom, whose grain opened by the heat

made a continual crackling, as if the sun itself were bursting forth into fire. One might believe this, on account of the heavy weather, and burning atmosphere, which did not seem to be caused by the sun, which was almost invisible behind a veil of gauze. The scorching vapors from the earth made the sight of the Glayzin seem deliciously cool, with its snow-capped summit, which apparently one might touch with his umbrella.

Roumestan could recall no landscape comparable to this, not even in his dear Provence. He could not imagine greater enjoyment than his. He forgot care, and felt no remorse. His faithful, trusting wife, the hope of a child, the prediction of Bouchereau about poor Hortense, and the disastrous effect which would be produced by the appearance of the decree of Cardaillac in "*L'Officiel*," were forgotten by him. His whole destiny depended on this beautiful girl, with a fair rosy face beneath her blue veil, and whose eyes reflected his own.

"Maintenant je me sens aimée,
Fuyons tous deux sous la ramée," —

she sang, gently pressing his hands.

While they rode along, as if borne on the wind, the landscape bordering the winding road grew rapidly broader, now showing a wide plain in a half-circle, with lakes and villages, then mountains that looked dark or light according to their distance. They were approaching Savoy. "How beautiful ! how grand !" said the singer ; and Numa answered softly, "How I love you !"

At the last halt Bompard joined them again, this time on foot, and leading his horse by the bridle, and looking very pitiable. "This is an astonishing beast," he at once said ; and, when the ladies asked if he had fallen, he answered, "No : my old wound has re-opened."

"Was he wounded? Where? When?" He had never spoken of it, but from Bompard one must expect surprises. They made him enter the carriage, his very quiet horse being fastened behind, and docilely trotting after them. They proceeded to Château-Bayard, whose two poorly-restored sentry-box towers are seen on a plateau.

A servant came to meet them, — a shrewd mountain woman sent by an old priest who formerly preached in the neighboring parishes, and lived at Château-Bayard, to which he had orders to admit tourists. When visitors are announced, the priest retires in a dignified manner to his room unless the visit is from distinguished persons: but the minister, being on a secret party of pleasure, took care not to give his title; and it was to ordinary visitors that the servant, who used phrases learned by heart and the sing-song tone of such people, showed what was left of the ancient mansion of the chevalier "without fear or reproach," while the coachman prepared breakfast in an arbor in the little garden.

"Here is the ancient chapel where the good chevalier morning and evening — I beg you, ladies and gentlemen, to look at the thickness of the walls." They looked at nothing at all. It was growing dark; and they brushed against the plastering, which was only partly lighted by a sliding loophole in a loft among the beams near the ceiling. Numa, with the little one's arm in his own, rather made sport of the Chevalier Bayard and "his respectable mother, Dame Helen of Germany." This odor of old things bored them. Even when Mme. Bachellery, in order to try the echo in the arches of the kitchen, sang her husband's last song in a rollicking manner, —

"I get this from papa, I get this from mamma," —

no one was shocked: on the contrary, it seemed tame.

But when out-of-doors, where breakfast was served on a massive stone table, and when the first pangs of hunger were appeased, the calm splendor of the horizon around them, with the valley of the Graisivaudan, the Bauges, and the frowning towers of the Grande-Chartreuse, and the contrast of this bold, wild nature to the small terraced orchard where the solitary old man lived among his tulip-trees and bees with his thoughts on God, gave them a grave, gentle feeling which resembled serious reflection. At dessert the minister, opening the guide-book to refresh his memory, spoke of Bayard, of "his poor mother who tenderly wept" on the day when the child, leaving for Chambéry to be a page to the Duke of Savoy, made his little jackass prance before the northern gate in the very place where fell the shadow of the big tower that was majestic and frail, like the phantom of an old vanished castle. Numa, becoming inspired, read to them the beautiful words of Mme. Helen to her son at the moment of his departure, —

"Pierre, my dear, I recommend, that, above every thing, you should love, fear, and serve God, and, if possible, in no way offend him."

Then, standing on the terrace, and giving a sweep of his arm extensive enough to reach Chambéry, he began, "This should be said to children, and is what every parent and every teacher" — Then he stopped, and slapped his forehead.

"My speech! This will do for my speech. I have it, superb! The Château-Bayard, a local legend. I have been seeking it for a fortnight, and here it is."

"It is providential," cried Mme. Bachellery, full of admiration; thinking, however, that the breakfast was ending rather soberly. "What a man! what a man!"

The little one also seemed very much excited, but the impressionable Roumestan did not heed it. The spirit of an orator stirred within him; and, full of ideas, he continued, "It would be fine," — and he gave a look around him, — "it would be fine to date it from Château-Bayard."

"If *monsieur l'avocat* would like a place to write in" —

"Oh! I wish to put down only a few notes. Will you excuse me, ladies, while coffee is being served? I will return soon. I wish to date it on the spot."

The servant-maid took him to a small and very ancient room on the ground-floor, on whose ceiling, which was rounded like a dome, were traces of gilding, and which they pretended was the oratory of Bayard. The spacious room adjoining, with a large canopied bed and Persian curtains, is shown as his sleeping-room. It was pleasant to write between these thick walls, which the heavy atmosphere could not penetrate, and near the open sliding window, through which the light fell across his page, and the fragrance of the little orchard was wafted. In the beginning the orator's pen was not rapid enough for his enthusiastic thought. Bowing his head, drunk with hidden fire, he let the well-known but eloquent phrases of a Southern lawyer flow forth, with brilliant flourishes here and there, as in his free handwriting. Suddenly he stopped, his brain being empty of words and overcome with the fatigue of the journey and the odors of breakfast. Then he walked from the oratory to the sleeping-room, speaking aloud, and becoming excited, and listening to his footsteps in the echoing room, which sounded like those of some illustrious ghost returning, then seated himself once more, but could not write a line. Every thing whirled around him, — the whitewashed walls, and the ray of light that

made him drowsy. He heard a sound of plates and laughter in the garden, far, very far away ; and finally fell into a deep slumber, with his nose on his unfinished writing.

A heavy thunder-clap brought him to his feet. How long had he been there? Feeling somewhat confused, he went out into the garden, now still and deserted. The air was heavy with the fragrance of tulips. Under the empty arbor, wasps were slowly flitting around the champagne glasses, and the sugar in the cups, which the servant was noiselessly removing, being overcome by the nervous fear of an animal at the approach of a storm, and crossing herself at every flash of lightning. She told Numa, that, as the young lady had a severe headache after breakfast, she took her into Bayard's sleeping-room to get a nap, closing the door "very softly," as she was bidden, in order not to disturb "the gentleman," who was working. The other two, the stout lady and the person in the white hat, had gone down to the valley, and they would surely get wet, for there was going to be a — "Look !"

In the direction that she pointed out on the jagged crest of the Bauges, where the stony summits of the Grande-Chartreuse were enveloped in lightning like that of a mysterious Sinai, the heavens were darkened by a very large inky streak, that grew larger as one gazed, and beneath which the whole valley, the rustling green trees, the golden wheat, the roads indicated by light lines of floating dust, and the silvery sheet of the Isère, had an extraordinary luminous prominence, in an oblique stream of white, reflected light, as the sombre, threatening, muttering cloud advanced. In the distance, Roumestan perceived Bompard's linen cap, shining like a lens in a light-house.

He returned to the house, but could not set himself to work. This time sleep did not paralyze his pen: on the contrary, he felt strangely excited by the presence of Alice Bachellery in the next room. But was she still there? He opened the door, and dared not close it again, for fear of disturbing the singer, who looked so pretty in her sleep. She had thrown herself on the bed: her dress was dishevelled, and her hair was crumpled, and snowy outlines were disclosed here and there where her dress was unfastened.

"Come, come, Numa, remember. The room of Bayard! Devil take it!"

He positively took himself by the collar, like a malefactor, drew himself away, and seated himself at his table, with his head in his hands, covering his eyes and ears, the better to consider the last phrase, which he repeated in a low voice, "*And, gentlemen, these last injunctions of the noble mother of Bayard, that have come down to us in the sweet tongue of the middle ages, we wish that the University of France*" —

He was enervated by the storm, that was as heavy and benumbing as the shade of certain tropical trees, and intoxicated by the exquisite odor of the bitter flowers of the tulip-trees, and that armful of fair hair spread over the pillow in the next room. Unhappy minister! In vain he clung to his speech, and invoked the chevalier "without fear and without reproach," the public instruction, sacred worship, and the rector of Chambéry. Nothing served him. He must enter Bayard's chamber; and this time went so near the sleeper that he heard her faint breath, while his hand touched the bed-curtains that framed the young girl in her alluring sleep. With her rosy flesh-tints that were pearly blue in the shadows, she was like a sanguine Fragonard bit of mischief.

Even there, on the brink of his temptation, the minister still struggled, and, with a mechanical murmuring of his lips was muttering the last injunctions which the University of France — when a sudden rolling of thunder, each clap coming nearer, awoke the singer with a start.

“Oh, how frightened I am ! stay, is it you ?”

She gave him a smile of recognition, her eyes looking as clear as those of an awakening child, and feeling no embarrassment at the disorder of her dress, and her eyes rested longingly on his. The room was suddenly buried in the darkness of night by the wind, which closed the tall Persian blinds, one after the other. Doors slammed, a key fell, and a whirlwind of leaves and flowers rolled over the gravel to the threshold, where the hurricane plaintively moaned.

“What a storm !” she said softly, taking his burning hand, and drawing him almost under the curtains.

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“And, gentlemen, these last injunctions of the mother of Bayard, handed down to us in the sweet tongue of the middle ages” —

The Grand Master of the University spoke these words this time at Chambéry, in sight of the old castle of the Dukes of Savoy, and that wonderful amphitheatre of green hills and snowy mountains, of which Chateaubriand dreamed before the Taygète. He was surrounded by embroidered coats, ermine, silk epaulets, and palm-leaves, and overlooked a vast crowd, who were stirred by the force of his spirited words, and the gesture of his strong hand, which still held the little ivory-handled trowel that had just cemented the first stone of the lyceum.

“It is our wish that every member of the University of

France address the same to his children: '*Pierre, my dear, I recommend you before all things*'" — And, while he quoted these touching words, his hand, voice, and broad cheeks trembled with emotion at the memory of that large, fragrant room, where, in the excitement of a memorable storm, the Chambéry speech had been composed.

CHAPTER XV.

ROUMESTAN'S VICTIMS.

It is ten o'clock in the morning. The ante-chamber of the Minister of Public Instruction, a long, badly-lighted lobby with gloomy hangings and oaken wainscoating, is filled with a crowd of solicitors, who are seated or walking about, and becoming more numerous every moment. Each new-comer gives his card to the solemn usher, who takes it, inspects it, and ceremoniously places it without a word by his side on the blotting-paper on the little table where he writes in the dim light from the window, that is glittering with a fine October rain. One of the late arrivals has, however, the honor of overcoming this august impassiveness. He was a stout man, tanned, sunburnt, and covered with tar, with two little silver anchors for earrings, and the hoarse voice of a seal as it rattles in the light morning mist of provincial ports.

"Say that it is Cabantous the pilot. He knows what I wish. He is expecting me."

"You are not the only one," replied the usher, smiling discreetly at his pleasantry.

Cabantous does not understand the *finesse*; but he laughs confidently, with his mouth stretched to the anchors in his ears. With a rolling motion of his shoulders he makes his way through the crowd, which moves aside from his wet umbrella, and seats himself on a bench near another patient soul, who is almost as tanned as himself.

"*Té, vé.* It is Cabantous. *Hé!* how do you do?"

The pilot begs pardon: he does not remember him.

"Valmajour, you must know; a name well known at the amphitheatre in Provence."

"Great God, it is true! *Bé,* my man, you may be certain that Paris has changed you."

The tambourinist was now a gentleman, with very long black hair brushed back of his ears in artist fashion, which, with his brown complexion and blue-black mustache which he continually twisted, made him resemble a gypsy in the Gingerbread Fair. Added to this, he held his head high like a village cock, with the vanity of a handsome fellow and musician, in which was betrayed his Southern exaggeration underneath his quiet manner and reticence. His failure in opera did not dishearten him. Like all actors in similar cases, he attributed it to the cabal. This word to his sister and himself had a barbarous and extraordinary meaning, being spelled like a Sanscrit word (the *kkabbale*, a mysterious animal, half rattlesnake, and half a horse of the Apocalypse). He tells Cabantous, that in a few days he will make his *début* at a grand *café* concert on the Boulevard,—a skating affair in which he will figure in tableaux at two hundred francs an evening.

"Two hundred francs an evening!" The pilot rolls up his eyes.

"And my *biographille* besides, which will be cried out in the streets, and my portrait, life-size, on all the walls of Paris. It will have an antique troubadour's costume, like the one I shall wear in the evening when I play the tambourine."

The costume is what pleases him. What a pity that he could not wear his cap with a curved rim, and his

pointed shoes, to show the minister the splendid contract that had been signed without his aid, and this time on good paper! Cabantous looked at the document under seal, which was blackened on both sides, and sighed, —

“You are very fortunate. Here am I, who have been expecting my medal for more than a year. Numa told me to send my papers, and I did so. Then I heard no more of the medal, nor papers, nor any thing else. I wrote to the navy, and they did not recognize me there. I wrote to the minister, and he didn’t answer me. And the most provoking part of it is, that now, when I have a discussion with the sea-captains about pilotage, not having my papers, the judges won’t listen to my rights. When I saw this, I steered my bark to shore, and thought to myself, ‘I’ll go and see Numa.’”

The unhappy pilot almost wept. Valmajour consoled and re-assured him, and promised to speak to the minister for him, and said this with a confident tone, with his finger on his mustache, like a man to whom one can refuse nothing. But this haughty attitude was not peculiar to him alone. All the men who were waiting for a hearing — old priests in their visiting cloaks, and with sanctimonious ways, methodical professors with authoritative manners, swell painters with head-coverings in Russian style, and stout sculptors with fingers like a spatula — had this same triumphant bearing. They were particular friends of the minister, and were sure of their success, and on arriving said to the usher, —

“He is expecting me.”

All had the conviction, that if Roumestan only knew they were there! This is what gave the ante-chamber of the Public Instruction its individual character, where

there was no evidence of the feverish pallor and trembling anxiety usually found in ministerial waiting-rooms.

"Who is with him now?" Valmajour asks, as he approaches the little table.

"The Director of the Opéra."

"Cardaillac? Oh, I know! it is about my business."

After the tambourinist's failure at the theatre, Cardaillac refused to give him another hearing. Valmajour wished to plead; but the minister, who dreads lawyers and small papers, begged the musician to withdraw his engagement, guaranteeing him a strong indemnity. It was this indemnity that they were no doubt discussing at this moment, and with considerable animation; for Numa's clarion-like voice rang through the office-door, which finally was opened with a slam, —

"He is your *protégé*, not mine."

With these words the stout Cardaillac comes out, crosses the ante-chamber at a furious stride, running into the usher, who is coming forward between two rows of men who are presenting their recommendations.

"You need only give my name."

"Simply let him know that I am here."

"Tell him it is Cabantous."

The man listens to no one, but walks gravely on bearing several visiting-cards in his hand; and the door which he leaves open behind him gives a view of the ministerial office filled with the light from its three windows that look upon the garden, and of a panel covered by the ermine-lined mantle of M. de Fontanes in a full-length portrait.

With a look of astonishment on his cadaverous face, the usher returns, and calls out, —

"M. Valmajour."

The musician, on his part, is not astonished at thus passing in before all the others.

Since morning his portrait has been hanging on the walls in Paris. He is an important person now; and the minister will not keep him anxiously waiting as in the draughts of a station. With a foppish, smiling look he plants himself in the middle of the sumptuous office, where secretaries are about to take down boxes and drawers in their hurried search. Roumestan, in a furious mood, thunders and scolds with his hands in his pockets.

"But those papers, devil take it! those papers of the pilot, are they lost? Really, gentlemen, there is such disorder here that" —

Then seeing Valmajour, he exclaims, "Ah, it is you!" and makes one bound towards him, while through the side-doors are seen the backs of the frightened secretaries, who are running away in terror, carrying with them piles of pamphlet-boxes.

"Well, will you never cease to persecute me with your cheap music? Was not one failure enough? How many do you wish? Now they tell me you are on the walls in a fancy costume! What is this hoax that has just been brought me, your biography? A fabrication of nonsense and falsehoods. You know very well that you are no more a prince than I, and that these parchments they talk about have never existed excepting in your imagination."

With an excited, brutal gesture he grasped the unhappy fellow by the middle of the jacket, took up a whole handful of it, and shook him as he spoke. In the first place, this skating affair would not bring in a *sou*. They were good for nothing but puffs. They would not pay him; and there would be only the shame of his name

shown up in dirty colors, with that of his protector. The papers would begin their jokes again. Roumestan and Valmajour the minister's *galoubet*! And, becoming excited at the memory of these insults, his broad cheeks shaking with a fit of aunt Portal's family anger, which was even more frightful in the solemn business surroundings where personalities are kept out of sight, he shouted with all his might, —

“Take yourself away, you wretch! take yourself away! We do not wish any more of you. We have had enough of your *galoubet*.”

Valmajour was stunned, and let him talk, while stammering, “Very well, very well,” and looked imploringly at Mèjean's pitying face, the only one whom the master's anger had not driven away, and at the great portrait of Fontanes which seemed scandalized at such violence. His ministerial air became more noticeable, as Roumestan lost his. Finally, being freed from the strong grasp which held him, the musician reached the door, and fled in despair, with his tickets for the skating entertainment.

““Cabantous the pilot,” said Numa, reading the name presented to him by the impassive usher. “Another Valmajour! No, indeed! I have had enough of being their dupe. It is over for to-day. I will see no more.”

He began to walk up and down his office, expending what remained of that great anger of which Valmajour had unjustly borne the whole force. “That Cardaillac! What impudence! To come and reproach him about the little one, in the presence of Mèjean and Roche-maure, here at the ministry! Really I am too weak. The nomination of that man to the Opéra is a serious mistake.” His associate shared this opinion, but took care not to express it; for Numa was no longer the

good-natured fellow of former days, who was the first to laugh at his fooleries, and to receive raillery and remonstrance. Having become the practical head of the cabinet, owing to the speech at Chambéry and a few other exhibitions of oratorical prowess, the intoxication of living on the heights, and in that kingly atmosphere in which the strongest heads are upset, had changed him, and made him nervous, headstrong, and irritable.

A door beneath the hangings opened; and Mme. Roumestan appeared, ready to go out, and elegantly dressed with an ample cloak hiding her figure. With the serene look that had lighted her pretty face for five months, she asked, "Is there a council to-day? — Good morning, M. Méjean."

"Why, yes, a council, a sitting, every thing."

"I was coming to ask you to go to mamma's. I shall breakfast there. Hortense would have been so pleased!"

"You see that it is not possible. I ought to be at Versailles at noon," said Numa, looking at his watch.

"Then I will wait for you. I will drive you to the station."

Numa hesitated only a second. "Well, I will sign this, and we will leave."

While he was writing, Rosalie, in a low voice, gave Méjean news about her sister. The winter weather was affecting her, and they had forbidden her going out. Why did he not go to see her? She needed all her friends. Méjean, with a sad, discouraged look, said, "Oh! I" —

"Why, yes, yes. Do not despair. It is only a caprice. I am sure it will not last."

She took a favorable view of the matter, and wished all her world to be as happy as herself, on account of a

joy so complete that she had a cautious superstition about confessing it. Roumestan, on his part, told of his expectation everywhere, to the indifferent as well as to intimate friends ; and, with comical pride, "We shall call him the child of the ministry," he said, and he laughed until he wept. Truly, for those who did not know of his life away from home, the town establishment imprudently kept up with receptions and an open table, this demonstrative and tender husband, who spoke of his future paternity with tears in his eyes, seemed unfathomable and content in his falsehood, sincere in his expressions, and to have baffled the judgments of those who did not know the dangerous complications of Southern natures.

"I will drive you, certainly," he said to his wife, as he entered the carriage.

"But if people are expecting you?"

"Oh ! I can't help it. Let them wait. We shall not be together long."

He took Rosalie's arm in his, and, pressing her to him as if she were a child, said, —

"*Té !* do you know, I am only happy with you. Your gentleness quiets me, and your coolness comforts me. That Cardaillac put me in such a state ! He is a man without conscience or morality."

"Were you not acquainted with him, then?"

"He manages the theatre. It is a shame."

"It is true that the engagement of that Miss Bachelery — Why did you consent to it? — a girl who is false in every thing, — in her youth, voice, and even her eye-lashes."

Numa felt that he was blushing. He now fastened them on for her with the tips of his big fingers. The mamma taught him how.

"To whom, then, does the worthless creature belong? 'The Messenger' spoke the other day of lofty influence and a mysterious protection."

"I don't know. To Cardaillac, no doubt." He turned round to hide his embarrassment, and suddenly threw himself back alarmed.

"What is it?" asked Rosalie, also looking through the *portière*. It was a very large notice of the skating entertainment, in harsh colors, which stood out under the gray rainy sky, and was repeated at every corner of the street, and at every empty place on a bare wall or the planks of an enclosure. There was a gigantic troubadour surrounded by a border of tableaux, a great yellow, green, and blue spot, with a yellow dab thrown crosswise to represent a tambourine. The long fence which encloses the buildings of the Hotel de Ville, before which their carriage was passing just then, was covered with the coarse, glaring advertisement, which startled even the Parisian idler.

"My executioner!" said Roumestan, with comical distress.

"No, your victim," said Rosalie, gently chiding; "and if he were the only one! But another has caught the fire of your enthusiasm."

"Who is it?"

"Hortense."

She then told him of what she was finally certain, in spite of the young girl's mystery, — of her love for this peasant, what she at first thought a fancy, and which disturbed her now as a moral aberration in her sister.

The minister became indignant. "Is it possible! That booby! that *jeannot*!"

"She sees him through her imagination, and more than all through the medium of your legends and inven-

tions, which she does not know how to see in their true light. That is why this advertisement and grotesque coloring which irritates you fills me, on the contrary, with joy. I think that her hero will appear so ridiculous to her that she will not dare love him any longer. Otherwise I do not know what would become of us. Can you imagine my father's despair? can you picture yourself as Valmajour's brother-in-law? Ah! Numa, poor creator of unconscious dupes!"

He did not defend himself; but was irritated with himself for the "cursed South" in him, which he did not know how to overcome.

"There, you ought always to remain as you are now, close to me, my dear adviser, my holy protector. There is no one so kind and indulgent as you who understand and love me."

He held her little gloved hand to his lips, and spoke with so much conviction that true tears reddened his eyelids. Then, warmed and relieved by this effusion, he felt better; and when they reached the Place Royale, and he had assisted his wife to alight with a thousand tender precautions, it was with a joyous tone, free of all remorse, that he sang out to his coachman, "Rue de Londres, quickly."

Rosalie, who walked slowly, heard this address; and it gave her a vague feeling of pain. Not that she had the slightest suspicion, but he had just told her that he was going to the station at St. Lazare: why did his acts never respond to his words? Another anxiety awaited her in her sister's room, where she heard, as she entered, the end of a discussion between Hortense and Audiberte, who still had a stormy countenance, the ribbon in her hair shaking with her fury. The presence of Rosalie

restrained her, as was visible by the expression of her lips, and frowning, wicked-looking eyebrows: but when Rosalie asked after her health, she was forced to answer, and then spoke excitedly of the *eskating*, of the fine attractions held out to them; and, becoming astonished at her calmness, she asked almost insolently, "Will not madame go to hear my brother? It is worth while, if only to see him in his costume." Hearing this ridiculous costume described by her, in her peasant vocabulary, from the notches on his cap to the pointed curve of the shoes, put poor Hortense on the rack, and she did not dare raise her eyes to her sister's face. Rosalie excused herself because her health would not permit her to go to the theatre. Besides, in Paris there were some places of amusement to which every woman could not go. The peasant woman stopped her at the first word. "Pardon: I go there as much as I like, and I think I am as good as any one. I have never done any thing wrong. I have always fulfilled my *religious* duties." She raised her voice, and showed none of her former timidity, as if she had acquired rights in the house. But Rosalie was far too kind, too much above this poor ignorant creature, to humiliate her, especially when thinking of the responsibility of Numa towards her. Then, with the kindest motives of her heart, and with all her natural delicacy, she spoke the words of truth which cure while slightly searing, and tried to make her understand that her brother had not succeeded, and that he never would succeed in this Paris which was so hard to please: and that, rather than continue in a humiliating struggle, and lose money in the career of an artist, it would be better to return to the country, buy back their house and every thing, the means for which would be provided, and to

forget in their life of labor, in the heart of nature, all the mortifications of their unfortunate expedition.

The peasant woman heard her to the end, without interrupting her, simply darting a satirical look at Hortense, from her evil eyes, in order to excite her to a reply. Finally, seeing that the young girl would not say any thing more, she coolly declared that they would not go away, and that her brother had engagements of every kind, — of every kind, — which it was impossible not to meet. Thereupon she threw over her arm the heavy damp mantle that had been on the back of a chair, and bowed hypocritically to Rosalie, with a “Very good-day, madame, and I thank you, at least,” then went away, followed by Hortense.

When in the antechamber, lowering her voice because of the servants, she said, “Shall it be Sunday evening? Half-past ten without fail.” And then, becoming urgent and authoritative, she went on, “You know that you owe it to your poor friend. To give him heart. What do you risk? I will come for you. I will take you there.” Seeing her still hesitate, she added almost in a loud voice, pitching it to a threat, —

“*Ah, ça !* are you engaged to him? Yes, or no?”

“I will come, I will come,” said the young girl, alarmed.

When she returned, Rosalie, who saw her looking sad and absent-minded, asked, —

“What are you thinking of, my darling? Does your romance still continue? It must be quite advanced by this time,” she added gayly, clasping her waist.

“Oh, yes, quite advanced !”

Then in a dull, melancholy tone, Hortense resumed, after a pause, —

“But I do not see the end.”

She loved him no longer : perhaps she had never loved him. Transformed by absence and the mild *éclat* which misfortune gave to the gallant chevalier, he seemed to her like the man of her destiny, and she was proud to bind her life to one who was losing every thing, success and protection. But on her return she saw with pitiless clearness and terror how mistaken she had been in him. Audiberte shocked her on her first visit by her strange ways, which she thought too free and familiar, and the guilty look with which she said to her in a low voice, “He will come for me : hush ! don’t say any thing about it.” She seemed to her too prompt and bold, especially in introducing the young man to her parents’ house. But the peasant girl wished to hasten matters ; and Hortense at once understood her mistake, at the sight of this strolling actor tossing back his hair as if inspired, and removing the Provençal hat from his peculiar head which was still handsome, and an evident attempt was made to have it appear so.

Instead of showing himself humble and apologetic towards Hortense for the generous impulse in his behalf, he retained the victorious foppish air assumed after his conquest ; and without saying a word, for he would hardly have known what to say, he treated the delicate Parisian lady as he would the Combette girl under similar circumstances, — took her by the waist with the gesture of a troubadour soldier, and tried to draw her to him. She disengaged herself, every nerve shocked from a feeling of repulsion, and left him startled and foolish. Audiberte quickly intervened, and scolded her brother severely. What did he mean by such manners ? He had learned them at Paris, in the Faubourg St. Germain,

with his duchesses, no doubt. "Wait at least until she is your wife," she said; and to Hortense, "He loves you so much, his blood is on fire, *pecairé*."

After this, when Valmajour came for his sister, he assumed the gloomy look of despair, of the man in the vignette, in the musical scene, "The sea awaits me, the cavalier Hadjoute." The young girl should have been touched, but the poor fellow seemed decidedly too insignificant. He did not know what to do, and smoothed the nap of his felt hat, while telling of his success in the *faubourg* of the nobility or of the rivalries he encountered as an actor. He talked to her for an hour one day of the rudeness of the handsome Mayol, who did not congratulate him after a concert; and he kept repeating all the time, —

"That is your Mayol. *Bé!* your Mayol is not polite."

Audiberte all the while preserved her watchful attitude, and the severity of a *gend'arme* of morals, before these two cold lovers. Ah! if she could have divined the disgust and dreadful scorn in the soul of Hortense!

"*Hou!* the coward, the coward!" she said sometimes, trying to laugh, with her eyes full of anger; for she thought the affair dragged too slowly, and believed that the young girl hesitated on account of the reproaches and repugnance of her parents. As if they would have been heeded by the proud, independent girl, if there had been true love in her heart! but how can one say, "I love him," and arm one's self, get excited, and contend, when one does not love?

And yet she had promised; and every day she was harassed by new exigencies, like this "rehearsal" at the skating-rink, to which the peasant girl wished to take her by force, counting on the success and influence of the

applause to carry her away. And after long resistance the poor child finally consented to go out that evening, unknown to her mother, by resorting to falsehoods and humiliating complicity, — she yielded through fear and weakness, and perhaps also in the hope of again finding her first fancy, the vanished mirage, and of rekindling the flame extinguished in despair.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SKATING-RINK.

WHERE was it? Where was she going? The hack had rolled on a long, long time, with Audiberte seated at her side holding her hands, re-assuring her, and talking with feverish warmth. Hortense looked at nothing, and heard nothing; and the grating of the little harsh voice near her mingling with the noise of the wheels had no meaning for her; nor did the streets, boulevards, and the façades seem to have their usual appearance. They wore a new coloring through her strong inward emotion, as if she looked upon them from a funeral or wedding carriage. Finally, with a jolt, they stopped before a broad sidewalk flooded with a glare of light, in which the jostling crowd were defined in deep shadows. At the entrance of a broad corridor, they came to a window where the tickets were sold; then through a red-velvet swinging door at once entered a large hall, whose interior resembled the nave, broad circumference, and high stuccoed walls of an English church where she once attended a wedding. But here the walls were covered with notices, and various advertisements of confectionery, cork hats, and shirts to order at "4 fr. 50," alternating with the portraits of the tambourinist, whose biography was called out in the peculiar voice of *libretto* boys, in the midst of a deafening noise, in which the murmur of the moving crowd, the humming of balls on

a billiard-table, the calling of eatables for sale, and bursts of harmony interspersed with patriotic fusillades from the end of the hail, were drowned by a perpetual sound of rolling skates going and coming across a broad railed space covered with asphaltum, in a crowd of crush hats and hats in the style of the Directory. Hortense walked behind the Provençal woman, feeling anxious and lost, and looking red and pale by turns beneath her veil. With difficulty she followed her through a labyrinth of small round tables in a row, at which women sat two by two drinking, with their elbows on the table, and a cigarette between their lips, their knees drawn up, and with a look of *ennui* on their faces. At intervals there was a well-filled counter against the wall, and a girl standing behind it, with a circle of kohl beneath her eyes, and a scrubby black or red wig, with glittering steel in a tangle on her forehead. The black and white skin, and smiling lips painted with vermilion, were found in all, like a livery worn by wan, nightly apparitions. The slow walk of the men also seemed sinister, as they rudely and insolently pressed between the tables, sending the smoke of their big cigars to the right and left, and being insulting in their manner of purchasing and drawing near to see the show. What most gave it the appearance of a market was the cosmopolitan public, speaking various tongues,—the hotel guests just arrived, and coming there in travelling *negligé*, with Scotch caps, striped jackets, and shawls still impregnated with the fogs of the Channel; and the Muscovites in furs trying to thaw themselves out; and Tartars from the Sprée, with long black beards and arrogant airs, hiding their animal-like yawns and hunger; and Turks in their fez and coats without collars; negroes shining as their black silk hats;

and little shrivelled Japanese dressed in correct European style, looking like scorched engravings of men displayed in tailors' shops.

"*Bou Diou !* how ugly he is !" said Audiberte suddenly, as she found herself before a very grave China man with a long braid down the back of his blue robe. Then she stopped, and nudged her companion's elbow.

"See ! see the bride !" she said, pointing to a woman stretched out on two chairs, one of which supported her white satin boots with silver heels. She was dressed in white, with an open corsage, a broad train, and orange-flowers fastening a short lace mantilla thrown over her hair. Then, becoming suddenly scandalized at the words which enlightened her in regard to this accidental orange-blossom, the Provençale added mysteriously "Dangerous, you know."

Then, to take Hortense from this evil example, she quickly drew her into the centre of the hall, where, in the background, in the place of the choir of a church, was the stage of the theatre ; beneath, intermittent electric lights, falling from two globular port-holes, and above, in the friezes, the two projecting, luminous eyes of a holy image. Here one found rest from the noisy scandals of the promenades. In the stalls were the families of small *bourgeois* and tradesmen of the neighborhood, but only a few women. One would have believed himself in a hall witnessing some spectacle, had it not been for the horrible sharp noise of the skating, which rose above all others with its regular, persistent rolling, which drowned even the sound of the brass instruments and drums of the orchestra, and rendered only the mimicry of tableaux possible.

The curtain then fell on a patriotic scene, — the lion

of Belfort, a huge creature in pasteboard, surrounded by soldiers in triumphant poses on crumbling ramparts, with *képis* on the end of their guns, and following the measures of an inaudible Marseillaise. The excitement and delirium stirred the Provençale; and her eyes stood out of her head, and she said as she gave Hortense a seat, —

“We are having a good time, *qué?* But raise your veil. Don’t tremble. With me there is no danger.”

The young girl, followed by the insolent people slowly promenading, among whose pale faces she was lost, made no reply. Before her she saw them again, with their coarse red lips, in two grimacing clowns in tights, dislocating themselves, a bell in each hand, and rattling off an air from “Martha” in the midst of their antics: it was true gnomish music, crude and stuttering, and quite in place with the harmonious babel of the skating. Then the curtain fell again; and the peasant, who had arisen and sat down a dozen times, moving restlessly, and adjusting her head-dress, suddenly exclaimed as she followed the programme, —

“*The Mount of Cordova!* the locusts! the *farandole!* It is beginning; see! see!”

The curtain, raised once more, showed on the canvas in the background a lilac hill, where white masonry of odd construction, half castle, half mosque, rose in minarets and terraces, and stood out in pointed arches and battlements and towers, with aloes and zinc palm-trees at the foot of motionless towers, beneath a very harsh indigo sky. In the suburbs of Paris, among the villas of men who have grown rich in trade, one sees this droll architecture. In spite of every thing, in spite of the harsh tones of banks of flowering thyme, and the exotic plants that found their way there for the Mount of Cor-

dova, Hortense experienced a feeling of embarrassment at this landscape from which arose her happiest memories, and at this Casbah of Osmanli on a mountain of pink porphyry. The reconstructed castle seemed to her the realization of her dream, but fantastic and top-heavy, as when the dream is about to change to the oppressiveness of a nightmare.

At a sign from the orchestra and at the flashing electric jet, long dragon-flies, represented by girls in clinging emerald-green silk tights, sprang forward, waving long, veined wings, and grating castanets.

"Only locusts!" said the Provençale indignantly.

They were already formed in a half-circle, in an aquamarine crescent, and were shaking their castanets very distinctly; for the noise of the skaters was becoming fainter, and a circle of buzzing voices was hushed as a crowd of heads drew near, and, leaning over, looked between head-gear of every kind. The sadness weighing on Hortense increased when she heard approaching in the distance, and swelling as it drew nearer, the deep rolling of the tambourine. She would have liked to fly to spare herself the sight of what was coming. The flute sent forth its thin notes in turn; and the dancers of the *farandole*, their feet keeping time to the music, raised the dust from the carpet, which was the color of earth, and wound along in their fancy costumes, — short and glaring skirts, red stockings clocked with gold, spangled jackets, head-gear of sequins and Madras, in Italian, Caux, and Breton style, with a fine Parisian scorn for local truthfulness. Behind them, with measured steps, pushing backward with his knee a tambourine covered with gold-paper, came the great troubadour, as represented by the advertisements, in half-tights, one leg yel-

low with a blue stocking, and the other blue with a yellow stocking, and wearing a jacket of puffed satin. The velvet cap shaded a face that was brown in spite of the paint, and of which one could see only a mustache stiff with Hungarian pomade.

“Oh!” said Audiberte in ecstasy.

The *farandole* was formed on both sides of the stage, before the locusts with large wings. The troubadour, who stood alone in the middle, bowed with an assured, victorious air, under the gaze of the image of God the Father, which powdered Valmajour’s vest with a luminous frost. The serenade began rustic and weak, hardly reaching beyond the foot-lights; and then, taking a short flight, struggled a moment in the banners of the ceiling and in the pillars of the large structure, to fall back upon the ears of a silent, bored audience. The public looked on without understanding. Valmajour began another piece, which, after the first measures, was received with derisive laughter, murmurs, and exclamations. Audiberte, taking Hortense’s hand, whispered, —

“It is the cabal; pay attention.”

The cabal here was represented in several cries of “Hush!” “Louder!” and jokes uttered in the hoarse voice of a woman, when witnessing the complicated mimicry of Valmajour.

“Have you done, learned rabbit?”

Then the noise of rolling skates and English billiards and busy footsteps drowned the flute and tambourine which the musician persisted in playing until the end of the serenade, after which he bowed, advanced towards the footlights, still followed by the hidden light which did not once leave him. His lips were seen to move and frame a few words.

"It came to me — one stop — three stops — God's birds."

His despairing gesture, understood by the orchestra, was the signal for a ballet in which the locusts embraced the houris of Caux who stood in plastic poses, or moved in a swaying, lascivious dance under the rainbow-hues of Bengal lights which reached the pointed shoes of the troubadour, who continued his tambourine mimicry in glorious apotheosis before the castle of his ancestors.

And this was her romance. This was what Paris had made him.

The old time-piece in her room having sounded in its clear tone one o'clock, Hortense rose from the easy-chair on which she had fallen exhausted on entering, looked around at her sweet virgin nest, in the comforting warmth of a fire in embers, and the soft light of a night-lamp. "What am I doing here? Why am I not in bed?" she wondered.

She remembered nothing ; feeling only stiff and sore in every part of her body, with a noise in her head that made her temples throb. She took a few steps forward, perceived that she still had her hat and cloak on, and every thing came back to her. The departure from that place after the curtain had fallen ; their return through the hideous market where the excitement increased towards the close of the evening ; the drunken book-makers fighting before a counter, and cynical voices whispering some number as she passed ; the scene with Audiberte, who wished her to come and congratulate her brother ; the insults which the angry creature hurled upon her on their way home in the hack, and her humility while kissing her hand and asking her pardon, — were all mingled together, and whirled through her mind as

well as the leaping of clowns, the discordance of bells, cymbals, and rattles, and the streams of variegated flame, around the ridiculous troubadour to whom she had given her heart. She shuddered with horror at this idea.

“No, no, never ! I would rather die.”

She suddenly saw in the glass before her a spectre with hollow cheeks and narrow chest bent forward with a shivering gesture. It resembled her a little, but much more the Princess d’Anhalt, whose sad symptoms she noted in pitying curiosity at Arvillard, and who had just died at the beginning of winter.

“Stay ! stay !”

She leaned over, looked at herself nearer, and recalled the unexplainable kindness which they had all shown her at the springs, her mother’s fear, and the tenderness of Bouchereau at her departure ; and she understood. At last she had her *dénoûment*. It came of itself. She had been seeking it a long while.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRODUCTS OF THE SOUTH.

"*MADemoiselle* is very ill. Madame does not wish to see any one."

Audiberte had received this same answer a dozen times. She stood motionless with her eyes on the ground before the heavy arched door with a knocker, such as are seldom found excepting in the *Place Royale*, and which being closed seemed to forever forbid her admittance into the ancient home of the *Le Quesnoys*. "Very well," she said. "I will not come again. They shall send for me now." Greatly excited, she walked away through the stir and bustle of this business locality, where trucks laden with bales, barrels, and rattling, flexible rods of iron, met wheelbarrows rolling under porches into yards where cases of packages were being nailed. But the peasant did not perceive the infernal racket and the jarring of the busy traffic which shook even the upper stories of high houses. In her wicked head there was another kind of jarring, from hard thoughts and from the thwarting of her will. She went along without fatigue, and, to save the expense of an omnibus, crossed on foot the length of the *Marais* to the *Rue de l'Abbaye-Montmartre*.

Quite recently, after a wild wandering through every kind of building, through hotels and furnished apartments, from all of which they were expelled on account

of the tambourine, her family had settled here in a new house, occupied at whitewasher's prices by a motley lot of fast women, Bohemians, business agents, and families of adventurers such as one finds in seaports, loitering on hotel-balconies among the arrivals and departures, watching the stream of humanity from which they are always expecting something. Here they are looking for fortune. The rent was very dear for them, especially now that the skating-entertainment was a failure, and it became necessary to advertise Valmajour's few performances; but in these freshly painted quarters, where the door was kept open at every hour for the convenience of the various unmentionable professions of the lodgers, among whom quarrels and disputes were frequent, the tambourine disturbed no one. It was the tambourinist who disturbed himself. The advertisements, notices, tights, and handsome mustaches had made ravages among the ladies at the skating-rink, who were less prudish than these minxes. He was now acquainted with actors from Batignolles, and singers in *café-concerts*, and the gay society that is met in a hovel of the Boulevard Rochecouart called the "Paillasson."

This Paillasson, where time was passed in dissolute lounging, playing cards, drinking bock, and staring at the pinchbeck performers of small theatres, and in low gallyantry, was the terror and enemy of Audiberte, and the cause of her fierce anger, beneath which the two men bowed their backs as under a storm of the tropics. They were ready to curse their despot in a green skirt, and spoke of her in the mysterious tone of hatred of school-boys and servants. "What did she say? How much did she give you?" and crept along behind her heels. Audiberte knew it, and watched them, and when out

hurried, being impatient to return ; this day in particular, having been away from home since morning. She stopped a second as she went up, and, hearing neither tambourine nor flute, said, "Ah, the beggar ! he is still at his Paillason." But as soon as she entered, her father ran to meet her, and stopped the outburst.

"Don't bawl so. There is company for you — a gentleman from the ministry."

Méjean waited for her in the parlor ; for, as it happens, in adventurers' houses, built by contract, the stories of which are exactly alike, they had a parlor, embellished like some delicate confection made with beaten eggs, with the cream of every thing, and of which the peasant girl was very proud. Méjean looked compassionately at the provincial furniture, which was lost in this dentist's waiting-room, which glared in the harsh light of two curtainless windows. It comprised nondescript articles and pieces of tinware, and a kneading-trough and basket, chipped and shaken by moving and travelling, and which shook off their rustic dust on the gilding and paintings in gum. Audiberte's pure, proud profile in Sunday ribbons, which also looked out of place in this fifth story of a real Parisian house, increased his pity for these victims of Roumestan ; and he gently explained the purpose of his visit. The minister, wishing to save the Valmajours from new disappointments, for which to a certain degree he felt responsible, sent them five thousand francs to pay them for giving up their home and for the attendant expenses, and to send them back to their native land. He drew the notes from his pocket-book, and placed them on the old walnut trough.

"Then we must leave?" the peasant woman thoughtfully asked without stirring.

"The minister desires that it shall be as soon as possible. He is in haste to know that you are at your own house, happy as before."

Valmajour the elder ventured a glance at the notes. "That seems to me reasonable. What do you say to it?" he asked Audiberte.

She said nothing, waiting for the end, which Méjean was preparing while turning his pocket-book over and over.

"To these five thousand francs we will add five thousand, which are here, in order to get back—to get back"—

Emotion choked him. Rosalie had given him a cruel commission. Ah! it often costs a great deal to pass for a strong and peaceable man: much more was exacted of him than of other persons. He quickly added in a very low tone, "The portrait of Mlle. Le Quesnoy."

"Ah! that's it—the portrait. I knew it, *parà!*" She accented her words in a skipping manner, like a goat. "You think that they can make us come from the other end of France, and can promise every thing to us who asked nothing, and then can send us off like dogs. Take back your money, sir! Most certainly we shall not leave. You can say so; and we will not return the portrait. It is like a contract. I keep it in my bag. It never leaves me. And I shall show it in Paris, with what is written at the bottom of it, that the world may know that these Roumestans are a family of liars! liars! liars!" She was foaming.

"Mlle. Le Quesnoy is very ill," said Méjean gravely.

"*Avà!*"

"She is going to leave Paris, and will probably never return alive."

Audiberte made no answer ; but the silent laughter in her eyes, the unrelenting look on her low, obstinate forehead, like that of an antique statue, under her little pointed cap, sufficiently showed the firmness of her refusal. A temptation then passed over Méjean to spring upon her, and to tear the calico bag from her waist, and run away with it. He restrained himself, however, and tried a few useless prayers. Then he, too, began to tremble with rage. "You will repent !" he said, and left the room, to the great regret of the elder Valmajour.

"Reflect, *Pichotte* ! you will bring some misfortune upon us."

"Never. We will make trouble for them. I am going to consult Guilloche."

"GUILLOCHE : DISPUTED CLAIMS." Behind this yellow card, pasted on the door opposite, there was one of those dreaded business-agents, whose whole office-furniture consisted of a very large leather bag, containing piles of doubtful histories, stamped paper, and also white paper for letters of denunciation and of extortion, crusts of pastry, a false beard, and sometimes even a hammer to knock down milkmaids, as was shown in a recent lawsuit. This type, which is very common in Paris, would not be worthy a line of portrayal, if the said Guilloche, whose name describes his face, which was seamed with a thousand little wrinkles in rows, had not added a new and characteristic detail to his profession. He wrote the poem of collegians. A poor devil of a clerk went about picking up tasks when recitations were over, and sat up late into the night copying verses of the *Eneid*, or the three voices of *λνω*. When disputed claims failed, Guilloche, who was a bachelor, settled down to this original business, the credit of which he claimed. When familiar

with the matter, he declared it capital. They would set the papers going, and arraign the minister.

The likeness itself was worth a mine of gold, only it would take time and running about, and advances which he exacted in something that had the ring of coin, as the Puyfourcat inheritance seemed a pure mirage. This distressed the rapacious peasant-girl, who was already cruelly tried, and all the more because Valmajour, who was much sought after in *salons* the first winter, no longer set foot in the Faubourg St. Germain. "It can't be helped: I will work. I will save, *zou!*" and the energetic little Arles head-dress shook as she moved around the large, new house, and went up and down stairs, retailing her story about the minister from floor to floor, and getting worked up, and scolding and jumping about. Then suddenly becoming mysterious, she would say, —

"Then, there is the likeness." She showed it with the furtive sly look of photograph-venders in passage-ways, when old libertines inquire for women in tights. "A pretty girl, certainly; and did you read what is at the bottom?" This scene occurred in houses of doubtful character, among skaters or people from the Paillasson, whom she pompously called "Mme. Malvina, Mme. Héloïse," who were very impressive in their velvet dresses, their chemises bordered with embroidery and ribbon, and the fancy-work which belonged to their business; and she did not care much what the business was. The portrait of the dear creature, so distinguished and delicate, received the insults of these curious, criticising women. They gossiped about her, and read the innocent avowal, and laughed at it. The Provençal woman, recovering her property with a furious gesture, and choking, fastened the slide of the bag containing the crowns. "I

think that by means of this we have them. *Zou,*" and away she went to the usher of the skating-rink, the usher for Cardaillac, and the usher for Roumestan ; then, as if that were not sufficient for her warlike humor, she still had stories to tell the *concierges* about the everlasting tambourine which now was banished by the exile of Valmajour in the cellar of a wine-dealer, where the noise of hunting-horns alternates with lessons in boxing and pugilism. It was in this cellar, by the light of a gas-jet paid for by the hour, that the tambourinist, wan and solitary as a prisoner, passed his hours of exercise looking at the linen shoes with soles of braided mat-weed, buckskin gloves, and copper horns hung on the wall, and sending out on the sidewalk variations from his flute in strident, plaintive notes.

One day Audiberte was invited to stop at the house of the commissioner of police in the neighborhood. She ran there very fast, persuaded that it was something about cousin Puyfourcat ; and she entered quickly, her head held high, but came out in a quarter of an hour overcome with a peasant's fear of the *gend'arme* who, at the very first words, made her return the likeness, and sign a receipt of ten thousand francs for which she gave up her lawsuit. However, she obstinately refused to leave Paris, and persisted in believing in her brother's genius ; for she still retained in the depths of her eyes the glitter of that long file of carriages one winter evening in the court of the illuminated ministry. On returning home, she informed her men, who were more timid than she, that they need not speak of the matter any more, but did not mention the money received. Guilloche, who suspected that she had the money, employed every means to get his share ; and, having obtained only

a minimum indemnity, he cherished a great rancor against the Valmajours.

"Well," he said one morning to Audiberte as she stood on the landing, brushing the best suit of the musician, who was still abed, — "well, you will be glad : he is dead at last."

"Who?"

"Why, Puyfourcat, your cousin. It is in the newspaper."

She gave a cry, ran into the house, calling out, and almost weeping, —

"Father — brother — quick — the inheritance !"

As they all stood excited and breathless around the infernal Guilloche, he unfolded "The Officiel," and read to them very slowly the following : "Dated Oct. 1, 1876 : the first tribunal of Mostaganem has, at the request of the officer of the administration of estates, ordered publication and notices of the successions hereinafter mentioned. Popelino (Louis), day-laborer. That's not the one. Puyfourcat (Dosithée)."

"That is he," said Audiberte.

The old man thought he must wipe his eyes. "*Pécaïrè !* Poor Dosithée."

"*Puyfourcat, deceased at Mostaganem on the 14th of January, 1874, born at Valmajour, in the commune of Aps.*"

The peasant-girl impatiently asked, —

"How much?"

"Three francs, thirty-five centimes !" shouted Guilloche in the voice of a street-peddler ; and, leaving the paper with them that they might verify the disappointing news, he ran away, with a burst of laughter which pealed from story to story, and reached the street where it

roused to mirth all the great village of Montmartre where the legend of the Valmajours circulated. "Three francs, thirty-five centimes," the Puyfourcat inheritance ! Audiberte affected to laugh louder than the others ; but the frightful desire for vengeance which was growing in her against the Roumestans, who in her eyes were responsible for all their ills, only increased the need of an outlet, some way of avenging, and the first weapon within reach.

Papa's countenance in this disaster was singular to behold. While his daughter was overpowered by fatigue and rage, and his son like a prisoner was pining away in his cellar, he, blooming and careless, without his former professional jealousy, seemed to have arranged a quiet life for himself apart from his family. He decamped immediately after the last mouthful of breakfast. Sometimes in the morning, when brushing his clothes, a dried fig, a caramel, and *canissons* dropped from his pocket, which the old man explained as well as he could.

He had met a countrywoman in the street, who insisted on coming to see them.

Audiberte shook her head.

"*Avai !* If I had been following you !"

The truth was, that while lounging through Paris he had discovered in the neighborhood of St. Denis a large provision-store, which he entered, being enticed by the sign, and tempted by the display of foreign goods, colored fruits, and their silver and embossed paper, in the window, and shining through the mist of a crowded street. The store, in which he became a guest and friend, and which was well known to Southerners who had become Parisians, bore the sign, SOUTHERN PRODUCTIONS ; and never was there a more truthful sign. Every thing within was a product of the South, from the storekeepers,

M. and Mme. Mèfre, two products of Southern fat, with Roumestan's arched nose, and with the blazing eyes, accent, manner of speaking, and demonstrative greeting, of the natives of Provence, which is seen even in the clerks, who familiarly use the "thou" in their conversation. Without the slightest embarrassment they shout over the counter, with a lisp, "Say, Mèfre, where have you put the sausage?"

Every thing was a product of the South, even to the whining, dirty little Mèfres, who are threatened every moment with being cut open, scalped, or ground to pulp, and who dip their fingers all the same into every open barrel; even to purchasers, who gesticulate and talk for hours, about buying pastry for two sous, or sit in a circle discussing the qualities of sausage with onion and sausage with pepper, and noisily exchanging aunt Portal's vocabulary; while a "dear brother" in a black dyed robe, a friend of the house, is trading for salt fish; while a quantity of flies, preserved in this baking heat, attracted by the sugar on the fruits, bonbons, and almost Oriental pastes, are buzzing in the midst of winter. When a stray Parisian becomes impatient at the slow attendance and the absent-minded indifference of the clerks, who continue to talk from one desk to another while weighing and tying up bundles, you should see how they crush him with their harsh accent, "*Té, vé*, if you are in a hurry, the door is open, and the cars pass by, as you know very well."

Among these compatriots the old man Valmajour was received with open arms. M. and Mme. Mèfre remembered having seen him in times past at a fair at a meeting of tambourinists at Beaucaire. This fair, which now exists only in name, has a Masonic hold upon the old

men of the South. In our Southern provinces, it was the fairy extravaganza of the year, and the diversion of the stunted lives of the people. They prepared for it a long time in advance, and talked of it long afterwards. It was promised as a reward to wives and children; and, if their husbands could not take them, they would bring back Spanish lace or a plaything in the bottom of their trunks. The fair, besides, was kept open a fortnight under the pretence of business, and afforded for a month the free, joyful, and careless life of a gypsy-camp. People slept with this or that inhabitant, on the counters of stores, or in the street, in wagons covered with awnings, beneath the stars of a warm July night. How delightful was business thus carried on, without the tediousness of shops, and transacted while dining, and in one's shirt-sleeves at doorways! A row of booths was erected along the Pré on the borders of the Rhône, which in itself was like a fair-ground, with every kind of boat and *lahuts* with lateen sails tossing about on their way from Arles, Marseilles, Barcelona, and the Balearic Isles, laden with wine, anchovy, cork, and oranges, and decked with banners and streamers fluttering in the strong wind, which were reflected in the swiftly gliding water. There was a noisy, motley crowd of Spaniards, Sardinians, and Greeks in long tunics and embroidered slippers, Armenians in fur caps, and Turks with their embroidered jackets, fans, and wide pantaloons of gray linen, thronging into the open-air restaurants, and displaying children's playthings, canes, umbrell'as, silver-work, pastilles from the seraglio, and caps. Whoever was once present on what was called "the pleasant Sunday," or "the opening Sunday," with its feasts on the wharves, in the boats and celebrated *trattorias*, at the Vignasse in the Grand Jardin, and the *Café Thibaut*, will sigh for it to the end of his life.

People felt almost as much at their ease with the Mèfres as at the Beaucaire fair ; and in fact the shop, in its picturesque disorder, resembled an improvised and foreign Capharnaum with the products of the South. There were bags of meal like golden powder, filled and toppling over, big chick-peas tough as leather, cooked chestnuts wrinkled and covered with dust and looking like the little faces of old wood-cutters, jars of green and black olives, copper bottles of sharp-tasting fruit preserved in oil, barrels of melon-rind preserves from Aps, — citron, figs, and quinces, and all the odd bits of a market which are preserved in molasses. Up on the shelves among the salads, were preserves in a thousand kinds of bottles, and in a thousand boxes of tin the dainties that were a specialty in each town, — the *coques* and *barquettes* from Nîmes, almond-cake from Montélimart, and *canissons* and rusks from Aix, in gilded and labelled wrappers which bore the signature of the firm. In addition they had early fruit, an importation from Southern orchards that gave no shade, where the fruit grown among scant verdure is like artificial stones ; solid jujubes with a beautiful gloss like new mahogany, by the side of pale azeroles, figs of every kind, sweet lemons, green or scarlet peppers, balloon-like melons, big onions, muscadine grapes with long transparent seeds in which the pulp trembles like wine in a goatskin, branches of bananas striped with black and yellow, windfalls in reddish-brown oranges and pomegranates, and among them were found round lamps of red copper with the wick enclosed in a small crown like a crest.

In short, everywhere on the walls and ceilings and both sides of the door, among dried palm-leaves twined together, were strings of garlic and onions, dried carobs,

chitterlings tied together, bunches of maize, — a mass of warm colors representing the whole summer's growth beneath a Southern sky, stored in boxes, bags, and jars, and shining out even on the sidewalk through the dim windows.

The old man entered, eagerly sniffing, very much excited, and full of longing. Though, with his children, he grumbled at the slightest task, and when sewing on a button wiped his forehead for hours, boasting of having done "the work of a Cæsar," he was always ready in this place to pound with his hand, to take off his coat to hammer and to unfasten boxes, tasting here and there an olive or bonbon, and enlivening his work with monkey antics and stories. Once a week, on the day the codfish arrived, he even remained very late in the evening, to help send off bundles. This Southern dish, codfish with sauce, is seldom found excepting among the "Products of the South;" the real, white, finely cut, and creamy, flavored with a bit of *aïet*, is found at Nîmes, from which place the Mèfres receive it. It arrives at seven o'clock on Thursday evening by the "Rapide," and is distributed Friday morning in Paris to all the good patrons whose names are inscribed on the register of the house. It is in this business record, with crumpled pages, smelling of spices and spotted with oil, that the history of the conquest of Paris by the Southerners is written. It contains the names of wealthy men and distinguished politicians, manufacturers, celebrated lawyers, deputies, ministers, the president of the Chamber, and, most illustrious of all, that of Numa Roumestan, the Vendean of the South, the pillar of the throne and the church.

But for the line on which Roumestan is written, the Mèfres would throw the whole book into the fire; for he

best represents their idea of religion, politics, every thing. As Mme. Mèfre says, who is even more charmed with him than is her husband, "You know, in behalf of that man one would let his soul be damned." And they like to remember the time when Numa, already on the way to glory, did not disdain to buy groceries himself. How well he knew how to choose a watermelon by the touch, and a sausage moist to the cut of the knife! and then his handsome, dignified face was so kind! He always had a compliment for madame, a kind word for the "dear brother," and a caress for the little Mèfres, who, carrying his bundles, accompanied him to the carriage. Since his elevation to the ministry, since those wretches the Reds had given him so much to do in the two chambers, they saw no more of him, *pécarié*; but he remained the faithful patron of the *Products*, and he was always the first to be provided.

One Thursday evening, towards ten o'clock, all the jars of codfish being tied up and set out in fine order on the desk, and all the products of the South being in stock, the Mèfres family, the clerks, and old Valmajour, sweating and puffing, were resting with the self-satisfied air of people who have finished a hard task, and were dipping rusks in warm wine and orgeat sirup, and like cats were lapping them. They must have something "mild and sweet," for Southerners do not like any thing strong. With the people here, as in the country, drunkenness is almost unknown. The race instinctively fear and abhor it.

They are intoxicated from birth, — intoxicated without drinking; and it is very true that the wind and sun distil a terrible alcohol from nature, whose effects those who

are born there more or less experience. Some have only this one drop too much, which makes them free in tongue and gestures, and see life sympathetically through a colored glass. It brightens eyes, enlarges streets, smooths away obstacles, increases audacity, and steadies the timid ; others, more affected, like little Valmajour and aunt Portal, arrive at once at the stammering, delirious stage, in which one's eyes are dim and one's limbs tremble.

You should have seen the votive *fêtes* of Provence ; the peasants standing on the table, howling and beating with their big yellow shoes while calling, "Waiter, a thimbleful of *gazeuse*!"¹ a whole village intoxicated over a few bottles of lemonade. What Southerner has not experienced the sudden prostration of the intoxicated, the breaking-down of the whole being with the suddenness of a sunstroke or a cloud over a March sky, when his anger or enthusiasm was expended ?

Without having the delirious Southern nature of his daughter, Valmajour was born with a streak of pride ; and that evening his rusk dipped in orgeat filled him with mad gayety, which caused him to grimace in the middle of the shop, with his glass in his hand and his mouth sticky, thus paying for his share, not by money, but by his performances as a clown.

The Mèfres and their clerks threw themselves back, writhing and shaking, on the meal-bags. "Oh, there is no one like Valmajour !" Suddenly the spirit of the old man was quenched, and his puppet-gesture was cut short, by the appearance before him of a provincial head-dress shaking with rage.

"What are you doing here, father?"

¹ Lemonade made with carbonic acid.

Mme. Mèfre threw up her arms towards the chitterlings on the ceiling.

"What ! is it your young lady ? You did not tell us. *Hé !* how little she is ! but she is a very fine girl. — Sit down, mademoiselle."

Through a habit of falsehood, as well as to give himself more liberty, the old man had not spoken of his children, and passed for an old bachelor living on his income ; but Southern people are not at a loss for an invention. If a whole swarm of little Valmajours had followed Audiberte, the reception would have been equally demonstrative and warm. They crowded round, and made room for her.

"You will have a piece of rusk, too, will you not ?"

The Provençale was amazed. She had come out of the cold and darkness of a December night, in which the feverish life of Paris was carried on notwithstanding the hour, and became wilder in the thick fog broken everywhere by swift shadows, the colored lanterns of omnibuses, and the hoarse sound of the cars. She came from the North and from wintry weather ; and suddenly, without transition, found herself in the midst of the Italian Provence, in the Mèfre establishment, resplendent — as Christmas was near — with epicurean riches of the sun and soil, in the midst of well-known accents and perfumes. She found again her native country, to which she had returned after a year of exile, struggle, and trial among remote barbarians. A feeling of warmth crept over her, and her nerves became relaxed as she dipped her biscuit in a thimbleful of Carthaginian wine ; and she answered all the good people, who were as familiar and as much at ease with her as if they had known her twenty years. She felt as if she had returned to her old life and habits ;

and tears came to her hard eyes, which had a lurid light, and never wept.

The name of Roumestan, spoken at her side, suddenly checked her emotion. Mme. Mèfre was examining the addresses of the packages, and telling the boys not to make a mistake, and carry Numa's codfish to the Rue de Grenelle, but to the Rue de Londres.

"It seems that in the Rue de Grenelle codfish is not in good odor," some one remarked.

"I believe not," said M. Mèfre. "There is a lady from the North there, with all the Northern peculiarities,—butter in the cooking, dear me!—while in the Rue de Londres there is a pretty creature from the South, all gayety and songs, who has every thing cooked in oil. I understand why Numa likes to be there best."

They spoke lightly of this second establishment of the minister, which was in a small, very convenient lodging near the station, where he could rest after the fatigue of the Chamber, free from receptions and ceremonies. The high-toned Mme. Mèfre would have made a great outcry if such a thing had been done in her household, only in the case of Numa it was natural.

He liked young lasses ; and did not all our kings run after them? Did not Charles X. and the amorous Henry IV.? It was owing to his Bourbon nose, *té, par là*. And with this light joking tone with which the South treats all love-affairs was mingled the hatred of race, and antipathy against the woman of the North, — the foreigner who used butter in cooking. They became excited, and told anecdotes about the little Alice, and spoke of her charms and success at the Grand-Opéra.

"I knew mamma Bachellery in the days of the fair at

Beaucaire," said the old man Valmajour. "She sang romances in the Café Thibaut."

Audiberte listened breathlessly, without losing a word, and fixed in her mind the name and address, her small eyes having a wicked glare like those of a drunkard, with which the Carthaginian wine had nothing to do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAYETTE.

ON hearing a light tap at the door of her sleeping-room, Mme. Roumestan started like one caught in a criminal act ; and, giving a push to the delicately turned drawer of her bureau in the Louis XV. style, before which she was leaning and almost kneeling, she asked, —

“Who is there? What do you wish, Polly?”

“A letter for madame : it is very urgent,” answered the English maid.

Rosalie took the letter, and quickly closed the door. It was in a coarse, unfamiliar handwriting, and on poor paper, with the “personal and urgent” of beggars’ petitions. A Parisian maid would never have disturbed her for so trifling a matter. She tossed it on the bureau, deferring the reading of it, and quickly returned to her drawer, which contained the wonders of the former *layette*. For eight years since the tragic event she had not opened it, as she feared it would bring back her tears ; not even now, through maternal superstition, and the fear of bringing herself misfortune once more, did she dare let her thoughts dwell too tenderly on the little *trousseau*, lest the unborn babe should feel her emotion.

This brave woman had all a woman’s nervousness, and the tremor and quiver of a sensitive-plant. The world, which judges without understanding, thought her cold, as the ignorant imagine that flowers are not alive ; but

now, her hope being of six months' continuance, she must take out all these little articles from their mourning folds and seclusion, and look at them, and perhaps make them over; for fashion even for new-born babes changes, and one does not always fasten their ribbons in the same way. It was for this sacred work that Rosalie had shut herself up in great secrecy; and in the large house of the minister, which was filled with the noise and bustle of business, and the excited coming and going from the offices of the administration, of commissions and sub-commissions, there was certainly nothing so serious and moving as this woman on her knees before an open drawer, with beating heart and trembling hands.

She raised the lace that had grown slightly yellow, and which preserved the perfume and the whiteness of innocent toilets, caps and bodices for various stages of its growth, and different ages, the baptismal robe, the stomacher with little plaits, and the doll-like socks. She saw herself in her sweet languor working for hours in the shade of the great catalpa, whose white blossoms fell into the work-basket among her sewing-cotton and light embroidery-scissors, with all her thoughts concentrated on the garment she was sewing, which filled her dreams and her waking hours. What fancies, what hopes, were hers! What a joyous stir in the leaves over her head, and what an awakening of new and tender emotions in herself! Then she was harshly called back to life one day. As she unfolded the *layette*, her despair, the treachery of her husband, and the loss of her child, came back to her heart. The sight of the first little covering for the cradle all ready to be put on at the moment of birth, with its sleeves, one folded in the other, and spread out, and of the caps rounded out to their full size, made

her burst into tears. It seemed to her as if her child had lived, and she had kissed and known him. A boy, certainly a boy, strong and handsome, with a milk-white skin, and the serious, profound eyes of his grandfather.

He would have been eight years to-day, with long curly hair falling over a broad collar; and at that age a child still belongs to the mother, who takes it out to walk, dresses it prettily, and keeps it amused.

Ah! cruel, cruel life! But gradually, as she drew out and handled the small articles tied with microscopic ribbons, with their embroidery and snowy laces, she grew calm. Well, life is not so cruel; and, as long as it continues, one must keep courage. She lost it all at that fatal event which changed her whole life, believing that it no longer remained for her to trust and love, to be a wife and mother, and that it only remained for her to watch the bright past recede like a beloved shore for which one sorrows. Then, after death-like years, hope had slowly budded under the cold snow of her heart, and now it was blooming again in the little one that was coming; and Numa was so changed and kind, and cured of his brutal violence. There were still weaknesses in him which she did not like, and an Italian deceit which he could not rid himself of; but "it belongs to politics," he used to say. She no longer had her early illusions: she knew that to live happily one must be contented with an "almost" in every thing, and from the half-happiness which life gives must shape a full happiness.

There was another knock at the door. M. Méjean wished to speak to madame.

"Very well: I will be down presently."

She joined him in the small *salon*, up and down which he was walking in great excitement.

"I have a confession to make to you," he said, in the familiar, almost brusque, tone that an already old friendship, not become a brotherly tie, permitted. "This wretched affair was ended some days; but I did not tell you, for I wished to keep it longer," and he held out the picture of Hortense.

"At last! Oh how happy she will be, poor darling!"

She felt touched at the sight of her sister's pretty face, bright and sparkling with health and youth, beneath her provincial disguise, and read underneath the picture, in very fine, firm handwriting, "I believe in you, and love you. Hortense Le Quesnoy." Then, concluding that this poor lover had read it also, and that he had been charged with a sad commission, she affectionately grasped his hand.

"Thanks!"

"Do not thank me, madame. Yes, it was hard; but for a week I have lived on those words: '*I believe in you, and love you.*' For the time being I imagined that they were addressed to me." And then he timidly added in a low tone, "How is she?"

"Oh! not well at all. Mamma is to take her South. She is willing to do whatever we wish now. Something like a spring seems to have broken within her."

"Is she changed?"

"Ah!" said Rosalie with an expressive gesture.

"*Au revoir, madame,*" said Méjean very quickly, moving rapidly away. At the door he turned about, and, straightening his stout shoulders as he stood beneath the partly raised hangings, said, —

"It is very fortunate that I have no imagination. I should be too unhappy."

Rosalie returned to her room very sad. In vain she

tried to overcome her sorrow, and remember her sister's youth and the encouraging words of Jarras, who persisted in seeing only a crisis to be passed. Gloomy thoughts came to her, and did not vanish with the snowy brightness of the *layette*. She hastily gathered the little articles scattered about, and arranged and locked them up; and, as she was rising, noticed the letter on the bureau, took it, and mechanically read it, expecting the usual petition she received every day from so many different hands, and which would be favorably received on account of a superstitious belief that charity brings happiness. That is why she did not at first understand, and was obliged to read again, the lines awkwardly written by the stiff hand of a schoolboy, Guilloche's young man:—

“If you like codfish with sauce, you will find some that is excellent at Mlle. Bachellery's, Rue de Londres, this evening. Your husband provides it. Ring the bell three times, and go right in.”

From these stupid phrases, with the insinuations underlying them, the truth, aided by coincidences and recollections, arose and appeared before her,—the name of Bachellery, pronounced so often within a year, enigmatical conditions about her engagement, the address which she heard him give one day, and his long stay at Arvillard. In a second, doubt became certainty. Besides, did not the past throw a light on the present, in all its horror and reality? It had been, and was now, only falsehood and dissimulation; and why had not this eternal maker of dupes spared her? It was she who had been foolish in being led by his deceitful voice and meaningless tenderness; and details were recalled which at once made her blush and turn pale. This time it was no longer the tearful despair of her first disappointments;

for with it was mingled anger against herself, who had been so weak and cowardly as to pardon him, and against him who had deceived her, and disregarded his promises, and his vows to atone for his sin. She would have liked to convict him there, at once ; but he was at the Chamber at Versailles. She had an idea of calling upon Méjean, but it was distasteful to her to oblige this honest man to lie. And forced to stifle a flood of strong conflicting feelings, in order not to cry out, and give way to the terrible nervous attack she felt coming on, she walked up and down, with her hands in a familiar *pose* at the loose waist of her dressing-gown. Suddenly she stopped, and started with fear. Her child ! He, too, suffered, and recalled himself to his mother with all the strength of struggling life. Ah ! my God, if he should die ! he too, like the other, at the same period, and under similar circumstances. Destiny, which they call blind, sometimes has very cruel combinations. She reasoned in broken phrases and tender exclamations, — “ Dear little one ! poor little one ! ” and tried to look at matters coldly that she might be able to conduct herself with dignity, and above all not endanger the only being that remained to her. She even took up a piece of work, Penelope’s embroidery, which always gives play to a Parisian lady’s industry ; for she must await Numa’s return, and have an explanation with him, or rather convict him of his sin by his attitude before the inevitable exposure of a separation. Oh ! how many confidences these brilliant wools and this regular, colorless canvas receive, and what regrets, joys, and hopes form the complicated reverse side, full of knots and broken threads, of this feminine work, in which flowers are peacefully intertwined !

Numa Roumestan on coming from the Chamber found

his wife drawing her needle in and out beneath the narrow circle of light of a single lamp; and the quiet picture, the beautiful profile softened by chestnut hair in the shade of thick luxurious hangings, and the lacquer-work screens, old copper and ivory ornaments, and faience, receiving the mellow, flickering light of a wood-fire, struck him by their contrast to the hubbub in the Assembly, where the brightly lighted ceilings were covered with a whirl of floating dust that rose above the debaters like the cloud of powder from a battle-field.

“Good-evening, mamma. Your room seems pleasant. The session has been a warm one. It has been still, considering that dreadful budget; and the Left hung for two hours on the coat-tails of poor Gen. d’Espaillon, who cannot put two ideas together without saying *S—— N—— D—— D——*. But the Cabinet got rid of him again this time; but you ought to be there to see what goes on after the New Year vacation, when they are occupied with fine arts. They count a great deal on the Car-daillac affair, as a balance to me. Ritter will speak, but Ritter is heavy. He has too much stomach!” Then with his peculiar shrug of the shoulder he went on, “Ritter against Roumestan, the North against the South. All the better. It will amuse me. He will work his own destruction.”

He spoke without waiting for an answer, excited by business matters, and did not perceive Rosalie’s silence. He seated himself on a cushion at her side, pulled away her work, and tried to kiss her hand. “Is your embroidering very urgent? Is it for my Christmas present? I have already bought yours. Guess what it is.”

She slowly drew away, and looked at him fixedly to embarrass him, and did not answer. His features looked

drawn and weary as usual, after an important session, and his face showed lassitude, betraying in the corner of his mouth and eyes a nature at once weak and violent, with all the passions and nothing to resist them. Faces in the South are like its landscapes, and should be seen only in sunlight.

"Are you to dine with me?" asked Rosalie.

"Why, no. They are expecting me at Durand's. A tiresome dinner. *Tv*, I am already late," he added, rising. "Fortunately they do not dress there."

His wife's eyes followed him. "Dine with me, I beg you," she said; and her musical voice grew hard as she urged him, and became threatening and implacable. But Roumestan did not observe it. "Then, business must always be thought of first, must it not? Ah! a public man cannot lead the life he wishes."

"Farewell, then," she said gravely; "since it is our destiny," she added to herself.

She heard the *coupé* roll away under the arch, and after carefully folding her work she rang. "A carriage, a hack at once. And you, Polly, bring my cloak and my hat: I am going out." Dressing herself quickly, she looked around the room which she was leaving, and where she regretted nothing, and left nothing of herself. It was the room of a furnished hired house, with its pompous, cold, yellow brocade. "Carry this large box down to the carriage." It was the *layette*, the only article which belonged to them in common, that she took. At the door of the hack, the English maid, who was greatly puzzled, asked if madame did not intend to dine. No: she would dine at her father's, and probably sleep there also.

On the road she was suddenly filled with doubt, or rather hesitation. What if there were no truth in it all? What if that Bachellery did not live in the Rue de Londres! She gave the address without much expectation of verifying it; but she must make certain.

They stopped at a little hotel of two stories, surmounted by a terrace with a winter-garden, the former lodging of a Levantine from Cairo who had just died a bankrupt. It was a small house, with closed blinds and lowered curtains, and with strong odors from the kitchen ascending from its noisy and lighted basement. The mere manner in which the door obeyed the three rings, and turned of itself on its hinges, enlightened Rosalie. Through the Persian drapery relieved by twisted fringe, in the middle of the ante-chamber, she had a view of the staircase with its velvety carpet, and the candelabrum from which the gas was streaming up at full blaze. She heard laughter, took two steps forward, and saw what she never afterwards forgot.

On the landing of the first story, Numa, in his shirt-sleeves, was leaning over the railing, with a red, excited face, holding that girl by the waist, whose appearance was also very singular, with her hair down her back over the ruffles and fluting of a rose-colored foulard *déshabille*. And he was shouting with his hurried accent, "Bompard, bring up the codfish!" It was there that the Minister of Public Instruction and of Art and Moral Culture, the great merchant of religion and morals, the defender of holy doctrines, ought to have been seen; for there he showed himself without a mask and pretence, at his ease and in *négligé* as at the fair at Beaucaire, with all his Southern nature showing on the surface.

“ ‘Bompard, bring up the codfish!’ ” repeated the little jade, purposely exaggerating his Marseillaise intonation. Bompard, no doubt the improvised kitchen drudge, was coming up from the pantry, with a napkin around his neck, and his arms around a large dish, which made the heavy door slam behind him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FIRST OF THE YEAR.

"GENTLEMEN of the Central Administration !

"Gentlemen Directors of the Fine Arts !

"Gentlemen of the Academy of Medicine !"

As the usher, who was dressed in great style, in small-clothes and with a sword at his side, made this announcement in a dull voice, in the solemn reception-room, a line of black coats crossed the large red-and-gold *salon*, and ranged themselves in a semicircle before the minister, who stood with his back to the mantle-piece, having near him his sub-secretary of state M. de la Calmette, his chief of cabinet, his dashing *attaché's*, and a few directors of the ministry, Dansaert and Béchut. To each constituent body presented by his president or a senior member, his Excellency addressed compliments about the decorations and academical honors awarded to a few members ; then the constituent body made a demi-tour, and yielded their place, retiring as others hastily entered, letting the door swing behind them, for it was an hour late, and each man was thinking of the family meal awaiting him.

In the concert-room, which was transformed into a cloak-room, groups of people were moving around, impatiently looking at their watches, buttoning their gloves, adjusting their white cravats under their drawn faces, and yawning from *ennui*, ill-humor, and hunger.

Roumestan also felt the fatigue of this great day. He had lost his fine ardor of last year at this time, and his faith in the future and reforms, and toned his speeches, chilled to his bones with the cold, in spite of the furnaces and the large blazing pile of wood ; and the snow-flakes dancing on the window-panes fell light and icy on his heart as on the lawn in the garden.

“Gentlemen of the *Comédie-Française* !”

These closely-shaven, solemn men, who saluted as in the grand century, stood in noble attitudes around their leader, who in a hollow voice presented the Company, and spoke of the efforts and the wishes of the Company, —the Company without any title or qualification, as we say God and Bible, —as if there were no other company in the world. Poor Roumestan must indeed be greatly dejected ; for not even this Company, to which he, with his blue chin, pig’s cheeks, and poses which he studied to make distinguished, seemed to belong, to arouse him to eloquence and grand dramatic sentences. For a week after Rosalie’s departure, he had been like a player who has lost his charm. He was afraid, and suddenly felt inferior to his fortune, and as if he were to be overwhelmed. Mediocre persons whom chance has favored have these spells and vertigos, which were increased in him by the frightful scandal that was about to break out, and the suit for separation, which Mme. Roumestan absolutely wished in spite of letters, advances, coaxing, prayers, and vows. For form’s sake, people at the ministry said that she had gone to live with her father on account of the near departure of Mme. Le Queuoy and Hortense ; but no one was deceived, and on every face moving past him, and from certain meaning smiles and too much hand-shaking, the unhappy man saw his adventure reflected in

the pity, curiosity, and irony of others. There was no one, even to the humblest clerks who had come to the reception in a jacket and long coat, who was not informed of it: it circulated in the office in couplets where Chambéry rhymed with Bachellery, which more than one copying-clerk, who was discontented with his pay, hummed to himself while making an humble bow to the supreme chief.

Two o'clock, and the constituent bodies are still presenting themselves, and the snow is piling up, while the usher announces irregularly, —

“Gentlemen of the School of the Right !

“Gentlemen of the Conservatory of Music !

“Gentlemen Directors of Theatres of Relief !”

Cardaillac came at the head, on account of the ancient date of his three failures ; and Roumestan had a greater desire to let his blows fall upon this cynical showman, whose nomination caused him such grave embarrassment, than to listen to his fine speech, that was belied by his fierce, pretentious look, and to answer him with a forced compliment, half of which fell in his starched cravat : “Very much touched, gentlemen, *mn mn mn* ; progress of art, *mn mn mn* ; we will do better still.” And the showman said as he went away, “Our poor Numa’s wings are leaden.”

When these men had left, the minister and his assistants did honor to the customary collation ; but this lunch, which was so gay and demonstrative the preceding year, felt the sadness of the patron and the ill-humor of his intimate associates, all of whom were a little angry with him because of their compromised situation. This scandalous lawsuit, coming just in the midst of the Cardaillac debate, would render Roumestan of no value to

the cabinet. That very morning, at the reception at the Elysée, the marshal said two words in the rude laconic eloquence of an old trooper, —

“ Dirty business, my dear minister, dirty business ! ” And, without precisely knowing the word the distinguished person whispered in an embrasure, these gentlemen saw their disgrace coming behind that of their chief.

“ O women, women ! ” muttered the *savant* Béchut in his plate. M. de la Calmette, after his thirty years of office, grew melancholy as he thought of his Tircis-like retreat ; and the great Lappara amused himself in putting Rochemaure in consternation.

“ Viscount, we must provide for ourselves. We shall be ousted before a week.”

Upon a toast from the minister to the New Year and his dear co-laborers, given in a voice full of feeling, with a tone as if tears were falling, they separated. Méjean remained last, took two or three turns up and down with his friend, although they had not the courage to say a word, then left. In spite of his desire to keep near him on this day, the upright nature which intimidated him like a reproach of his conscience, but sustained and re-assured him, Numa could not prevent Méjean from running about to make calls, and offer wishes and presents, any more than he could forbid his usher to go home to his family, and unharness from his sword and short breeches.

What solitude, like a Sunday in a factory when the machinery is still, pervaded the ministry ! In every room up stairs and down, in his office, where he tried in vain to write, and in his room, which was filled with his sobs, everywhere the light January snow whirled at the large windows, veiled the horizon, and made more intense a

silence like that of the steppes. Oh the pain and penalties of greatness ! A clock struck four, another answered, and others still, in the desert of a vast palace, where it seemed as if every thing but time was dead and motionless. The idea of staying there until evening in a *tête-à-tête* with his chagrin frightened him. He would have liked to thaw in the warmth of a little friendship and tenderness. So many furnaces and mouths of heat with one-half of a tree in a state of combustion did not make a fireside. For a moment he thought of the Rue de Londres. But he had sworn to his attorney (for the attorneys were already on the case) to keep quiet until after the lawsuit. Suddenly a name came into his mind.

“Bompard ! Why had he not come ?”

Ordinarily on festival mornings he came first, with his arms full of bouquets and bags of bonbons for Rosalie, Hortense, and Mme. Le Quesnoy, and with the expressive smile on his lips of a good grandpapa who brings Christmas presents. Roumestan of course bore the expense of these surprises, but the friend Bompard had imagination enough to forget it ; and Rosalie, notwithstanding her antipathy, could not help growing tender when she thought of the privations the poor fellow must impose upon himself to be so generous.

“If I should go for him, we could dine together.”

He was reduced to this ; and regardless of his black coat, his decorations and orders, went out on foot by the Rue Bellechasse.

The wharves and bridges were white ; but after crossing the Carrousel, neither the ground nor air preserved a trace of snow. It disappeared under the heavy travel of the thoroughfare, in the swarming crowd on the sidewalks, at store-windows, and around omnibus offices. This

tumult of a holiday evening, with the cries of coachmen, and the calls of street-peddlers, in the confusion and the glare from the windows, the lilac lights of the Jablochkoff overpowering the yellow twinkling of the gas and the last gleams of pale daylight, lulled Roumestan's chagrin, which was diverted by the bustle of the street, as he went to the Boulevard Poissonnière, where the former Tcherkess, who was very sedentary, like all imaginative persons, had lived for twenty years, ever since his arrival in Paris.

No one was acquainted with the interior of Bompard's house, of which, however, he talked a great deal, as well as of his garden, and of his artistic furniture, to purchase which he attended all the sales of the Hotel Drouot.

"Come some morning, and eat a cutlet with me," was his regular invitation which he gave right and left. If any one accepted it, however, he would run against porters, see bells wrapped in paper or without any wire, and find no one at home. For a year Lappara and Roche-maure had tried in vain to make their way into Bompard's house, and to circumvent the extraordinary inventions of the Provençal, who defended the mystery of his lodgings, even to loosening the bricks at the entrance, that he might say to his friends through the barricade, "Very sorry, my good friends. An escape of gas. It sprung a leak last night."

After mounting countless stories, wandering through spacious passages, stumbling against invisible steps, and disturbing the reveries of chambermaids in their rooms, Roumestan, out of breath from the climbing to which his distinguished limbs were not accustomed since he had become a man of leisure, suddenly hit against a great wash-basin hanging on the wall.

"Who is there?" lisped a voice with a well-known accent.

The door, weighted by a row of pegs on which hung the whole winter and summer wardrobe of the occupant, turned slowly; for the room was small, and Bompard, in order not to lose an inch of space, was forced to convert the entry into a dressing-room. His friend found him lying on a small iron bed, with his forehead decked with a scarlet headgear, and a kind of Dantesque coif, which stood up with astonishment at sight of the illustrious visitor.

"It cannot be you!"

"Are you ill?" asked Roumestan.

"Ill? I am never ill."

"Then, what are you doing there?"

"You see, I am collecting myself." To explain, he added, "I have so many projects and inventions in my head, that at times my wits are scattered and become lost, and I can find them again only when in bed."

Roumestan looked for a chair; but there was only one, which served as a night-table, and was laden with books, papers, and a toppling candle. Therefore he seated himself at the foot of the bed.

"Why have we not seen you lately?" he asked.

"You are jesting. After what happened I could not meet your wife again. Consider, I stood there before her holding the codfish. It required all my self-possession not to let it fall."

"Rosalie is no longer at the ministry," said Numa sadly.

"Then you have not become reconciled? You astonish me." It did not seem to him possible on the part of Mme. Numa, a person of such good sense; for, after all, it only amounted to a mere fancy.

"You do not know her," said Numa, interrupting him. "She is a relentless woman, — the perfect image of her father and of the Northern race, my dear fellow. She is not like us, among whom the greatest anger evaporates in gestures and threats, and then in the turn of a hand leaves us. They retain it ! It is terrible !"

He did not tell him that she had already forgiven once. To escape his sad thoughts he said, "Get up and dress yourself. I have come to take you to dine with me."

While Bompard was proceeding with his toilet on the landing, the minister inspected the attic-room lighted by a small window like a snuff-box, from which dripped the melting snow. He was filled with pity at the barrenness of the room, the damp plastering, faded paper, and a little rusty stove without a fire notwithstanding the cold season ; and, accustomed to the comfort and luxury of his palace, he wondered how any one could live there.

"Have you seen the garden?" cried Bompard joyously from his wash-basin.

The garden was the leafless top of three plane-trees, which could be seen only by climbing on the one chair of the lodging-room.

"And my little museum?"

This was the term he applied to several labelled articles on a plank, — a brick, a short pipe, a rusty blade, and an ostrich's egg. But the brick came from the Alhambra ; the knife was used to execute the vengeance of a famous Corsican bandit ; the short pipe bore the inscription, "Pipe of a convict from Morocco ;" and, finally, the hardened egg represented the failure of a beautiful dream, all that remained — besides a few laths and pieces of cast-iron piled up in a corner — of the Bompard incubator.

"Oh ! I now have something better than that, my good

fellow, — a wonderful idea, and there are millions in it ; but I cannot say any thing about it at present. What are you looking at? That? it is my brevet as major. *Bé*, yes, major of the *Aioli*." The purpose of this society of the *Aioli* was to assemble once a month all the Southerners residing in Paris to eat dishes cooked with garlic, that they might not lose the flavor and accent of their native place. The organization was a powerful one, comprising an honorary president, presidents, vice-presidents, majors, questors, censors, and treasurers, all brevetted on pink paper with silver bands, with a garlic-blossom in a pompon. This precious document was displayed on the wall by the side of announcements of every color, sales of houses, and railroad advertisements, which Bompard liked to have under his eyes, "to stimulate his imagination," he said ingenuously. One read on the wall, "Castle for sale, one hundred and fifty hectares, meadows, hunting-grounds, a river, and fish-pond ;" "Pretty little estate in Touraine, with vineyards, the sainfoin plant, and a mill on the Cize ;" "A journey through Switzerland, Italy, Lake Maggiore, and the Borromean Isles." It exalted him as much as if there were real landscapes hung on the wall. In imagination he lived in these places.

"You rascal !" said Roumestan with a shade of envy of this wretched visionary who was so happy among his old trash. "You have a strong imagination. Come, are you ready? Let us go down : it is icy cold in your rooms."

After a few turns in the light and the gay bustle of the boulevard, the friends found themselves in the cheering, pleasant warmth of a large restaurant, before oysters on the shell and a bottle of *Château-Yquem* carefully uncorked.

"To your health, comrade. I wish you health and happiness."

"*Ti*, really," said Bompard: "we haven't embraced yet."

With moist eyes they embraced across the table; and, however tanned the leather-skinned Tcherkesse, Roumestan felt cheered in his company. Ever since the morning he longed to embrace some one. Then they had known each other so long; and thirty years of their life arose in their memory as they sat at the table. The odor of delicate dishes and costly wines brought before them the days of their youth, fraternal memories, excursions and games in which they saw again their youthful faces; and they interspersed their confiding words with a *patois* which made them feel even nearer to each other.

"*T'en souvénès, digo?* Say, don't you remember?"

In a parlor near by, clear ringing laughter and faint screams were heard.

"To the devil with the women!" said Roumestan: "there is nothing like friendship;" and they drank this time to friendship. But the conversation took another turn.

"What has become of the little one?" asked Bompard, with a twinkle in his eye. "How is she?"

"Oh! I have not seen her since that time, you know."

"Of course, of course," said Bompard, suddenly becoming very grave with an expression assumed for the occasion.

Some one behind the drapery was now heard playing on the piano fragments of waltzes, fashionable quadrilles, and measures of operas, which by turn were lively and sad. The friends ceased talking in order to listen, while picking grapes from their stems; and Numa, with whom

every feeling seemed to be on a pivot, and to have two faces, began to think of his wife and child, and his lost happiness, and, leaning on his elbows, opened his heart to his friend.

"Eleven years of confidence and affection destroyed and vanished in a moment! Is it possible? O Rosalie, Rosalie!"

No one could know what she had been to him, and even he understood it only after she left him. She had such an upright mind and honest heart, and her shoulders and arms were so beautiful! She was not a doll stuffed with sawdust, like the little one. Her figure was well rounded, and her skin delicate and transparent as amber. "But you see, comrade, there is no doubt that when one is young one needs surprises and adventures, — hasty rendezvous made more exciting by the fear of being discovered, stairs descended four at a time, with one's clothing over one's arm, for all this belongs to love; but at our age what one desires most of all is peace, which philosophers call security in pleasure, and only marriage gives it."

He rose with a start, threw down his napkin, and said, "Come, let us be off."

"Where are we going?" asked Bompard passively.

"To walk under her window as we did eleven years ago. This is what the great Master of the University has come to, my dear fellow."

The friends walked a long while under the arches of the Place Royale, where the garden covered with snow formed a square of white between the fences; and, as they walked, they looked searchingly at the jagged Louis XIII. roofs, chimneys, balconies, and tall windows of the hotel Le Quesnoy.

"To think she is there so near," sighed Roumestan, "and I cannot see her!"

Bompard, with his feet in the mud, shivered, and could not understand this sentimental excursion. To bring it to an end he used artifice; and, knowing that Roumestan was tender, and fearful of the slightest illness, he said treacherously and insinuatingly, —

"You will get cold, Numa."

The Southerner was frightened, and they returned to their carriage.

She was there in the parlor where he first saw her, and where the same furniture, having reached that age when, like temperaments, it cannot be made over, remained in the very same positions. There were only a few faded wrinkles in the tawny hangings, and a dimness on the mirrors like that on deserted ponds which nothing has disturbed; and the faces of the aged parents bowed beneath the gas-jets, and in the company of their usual partners, looked even more worn. Mme. Le Quesnoy's features were swollen and drawn down as if the muscles were weakened; and the president, with the same proud, rebellious look in his hard blue eyes, looked even paler than of old. Rosalie, seated near an arm-chair whose cushions still bore the impress of the form of her sister, who had just retired for the night, and to whom she had been reading aloud, continued the reading to herself in the silence of the whist-table, which was broken only by an occasional word or exclamation from the players.

It was a book she was fond of in her youth, by one of those natural poets whom her father had taught her to love; and from the blank verses her girlhood, and the fresh, strong impressions of her early reading, rose before her.

“Far, far from here, and free of pain,
The belle, with happy rustic swain,
Perhaps had sought some limpid spring,
And plucked its berries, hand in hand,
Though there she lost at love’s command
Her heart, less sorrow would it bring.”

The book fell from her hands to her knees ; the last verses echoing like a sad song in the depths of her being, and reminding her of troubles forgotten for a moment. Such is the cruelty of poets. They soothe and calm, then with a word pierce the wound they were about to heal. She saw herself in her home as eleven years ago, when Numa was paying court to her, and bringing her bouquets, when in all the charm of her twentieth year she adorned herself to be beautiful in his eyes, and watched him from the window as he came, as one watches her destiny approach.

In every corner there were echoes of his cheerful and tender voice, which was so ready to deceive. On looking over the music scattered on the piano, one might have found the duets which they used to sing together : every thing around her seemed an accomplice in the shipwreck of her ruined life. She thought of what she might have been, and of the life she might have led by the side of an honest man and loyal companion. If it were not a brilliant or ambitious, it would have been a simple, retired one, in which they might have bravely borne together every sorrow until death. She became so absorbed in her dream, that when the game of whist was over, and the intimate guests had gone almost without her noticing it, and she had mechanically answered the friendly, pitying “Good-night” of each, she did not perceive that the president, instead of escorting his friends as was his

habit every evening, whatever the season or weather, was striding up and down the parlor. He finally stopped before her, and asked in a voice which made her start, —

“Well, my child, what do you think? What have you decided upon?”

“My resolution is unchanged, father.”

M. Le Quesnoy seated himself near her, took her hand, and tried to persuade her.

“I have seen your husband. He consents to every thing. You will live here near me during the absence of your mother and sister, and even after their return if your resentment still continues. But I repeat, the lawsuit is impossible. I hope that you will not attempt it.”

Rosalie shook her head.

“You do not know that man, father. He will employ all his astuteness to entrap and capture me, and to make me his voluntary dupe, accepting humiliation and loss of dignity. Your daughter is not that kind of a woman. I desire that the rupture shall be final and irreparable, and openly announced to the whole world.”

Mme. Le Quesnoy, from the table where she was arranging cards and counters, gently interposing, without turning round said, “Forgive, my child, forgive.”

“Yes, that is easy to say when one has a loyal, upright husband, like yours, and when one has not known the dejection caused by the falsehood and treachery woven around one. He is a hypocrite, I tell you. He has one kind of morals for Chambéry, and another for the Rue de Londres. His words and acts always disagree. He is two-faced, and has two ways of talking, and has all the feline, seductive traits of his race. In short, he is a man of the South.” And, forgetting herself in her angry outburst, she went on: “Besides, I have already forgiven

him once. Yes, two years after my marriage. I did not tell you, because I spoke of it to no one. I was made very unhappy. Then we remained together only on account of his oath. His life is nothing but perjury. Now it is over forever."

The president insisted no longer, rose slowly, and spoke to his wife. There was whispering and a discussion, surprising between the authoritative man and the humble, completely subdued creature. "You must tell her, — yes, yes, you must. I wish you to tell her;" and without adding another word, M. Le Quesnoy left the room, and the sound of his usual regular, ringing step ascended from the deserted arcades, and was heard in the large, solemn parlor.

"Come here," said the mother to her daughter, with a gesture of tenderness. "Nearer, nearer still."

She would not have dared to say it quite aloud. And even as near as they were, heart against heart, she still hesitated.

"Listen: it is he who wishes it. He wishes that I should tell you that your destiny is that of every woman, and that your mother did not escape it."

Rosalie was alarmed at this confidence, which she divined at the first words; while a dear aged voice, broken with sobs, could hardly articulate a very sad story — in every point resembling her own — of the infidelity of her husband from the very beginning of housekeeping, as if with poor united beings who had for their motto, "Deceive me, or I deceive you," the husband was eager to begin first, in order to keep up the superiority of his rank.

"Oh! enough, enough, mamma! You make me ill."

Her father, whom she admired so much, and placed

above all men ! the firm, upright magistrate ! Were men, both in the North and the South, all traitors and perjurers ? Though she wept not for the treachery of her husband, she shed a flood of burning tears at the humiliation of her father. They expected in this way to make her waver. No ! a hundred times no ! she would not forgive. Ah ! such was marriage. Well, shame and scorn upon marriage. What mattered the fear of scandal and worldly proprieties, since every one was trying to see who could best defy them ?

Her mother took her, and pressed her to her heart, to soften the rebellion of her young conscience, which was wounded in its faith and in its dearest beliefs ; and she softly caressed her as one rocks an infant.

"Yes, you will forgive. You will do as I have done. It is our lot, you know. Ah ! in the first moment I, too, felt great sorrow and a desire to throw myself out of the window. But I thought of my child, of my poor little André, who was to be born, and who grew up and died loving and respecting his family. You also will forgive, in order that your child may have the happiness and peace which my courage gave you, and may not be one of those half-orphans who are claimed first by one then by the other parent, and are brought up by one to hate and to feel contempt for the other. You will also remember that your father and mother have greatly suffered, and that new despair threatens them."

She stopped, overcome ; then solemnly continued, "My daughter, every sorrow is appeased, and every wound can be healed. The death of those one loves is the only irreparable misfortune."

In the exhaustion which followed these words, her mother's face seemed to Rosalie to have gained in char-

acter what her father's had lost in her eyes. She was vexed with herself for having so long been blind to the expression of sublime self-renunciation and resignation beneath the apparent weakness caused by many sorrowful blows. Therefore it was for her sake, only for her sake, that in gentle, almost forgiving words she abandoned her intention of avenging herself by a lawsuit. "Only do not insist on my returning to him. That would cause me too much shame. I will accompany my sister South. Afterwards we will see."

The president now came in. He saw the mother throwing her arms around the neck of her child, and understood that their cause was won. But at the cost of what a sacrifice !

"Thank you, my daughter," he murmured, deeply touched. Then, after hesitating a moment, he approached Rosalie for the customary good-night. But the forehead usually offered so tenderly was held back, and the kiss fell on her hair.

"Good-night, father."

He said nothing, but walked away with a bowed head and a convulsive shudder of his high shoulders. He who had accused and condemned so many, he the first magistrate in France, was now judged in his turn.

CHAPTER XX.

HORTENSE LE QUESNOY.

THROUGH one of those sudden changes of scene so frequent in a parliamentary comedy, the sitting of the 8th of January, when Roumestan's fortunes seemed to be declining, was equivalent to a brilliant triumph. When he ascended the platform to answer the sharp satire of Rougeot about the management of the Opéra, the wretched work made of fine arts, and the feebleness of the reforms boastingly proclaimed by the supernumeraries of the sacristan ministry, Numa had just heard that his wife had left, having given up the lawsuit; and this good news, which was known to him alone, gave a bright assurance to his reply. He was haughty, free, and impressive, and referred to the calumnies whispered about, and to the expected scandal, —

"There will be no scandal, gentlemen," he said. And the tone in which he said this caused a lively disappointment among the fair and curious wearers of the toilets which overflowed the boxes as if they were longing for some great excitement, and had come there to see the conqueror conquered. Ritter's speech was annihilated: the South captured the North. Gaul was once more conquered. When Roumestan stepped from the platform bathed with perspiration, speechless, and feeling as if he had been ground in the mill, it pleased his pride to have his party, very cold and almost hostile a moment

ago, and his colleagues in the cabinet who had accused him of compromising them, surround him with praise and enthusiastic flattery. And in the intoxication of success, his wife's withdrawal of her suit constantly recurred to him as a final deliverance.

His mind was relieved of a burden: his thoughts became collected, and his mood communicative, so that when returning to Paris the idea came to him to call at Rue de Londres. Oh, only as a friend! to re-assure that poor child, who was as anxious as he about the result of the speech, and who bore their mutual exile with so much courage, and sent him in her simple writing, dried with rice-powder, kind little letters in which she related her daily life, and exhorted him to patience and prudence, —

“No, no, do not come, poor dear! Write me, and think of me. I shall be strong.”

There was no performance at the Opéra that evening; and during the short journey from the station to the Rue de Londres, while clasping in his hand the little key which had tempted him more than once within a fortnight, Numa thought to himself, —

“How happy she will be!”

The door opened and closed noiselessly; and he suddenly found himself in the darkness, as the gas had not been lighted. This neglect gave the house an appearance of mourning and widowhood, which flattered him. The stair-carpet deadening the sound of his rapid step, unannounced he entered the parlor hung with Japanese curtains of delightfully unnatural shades for the benefit of the artificial gold of the little one's hair.

“Who is there?” asked a soft but angry voice from the lounge.

“It is I, *pardi*.”

There was a cry, and a spring ; and in the dim twilight there was a flutter of white petticoats, and the singer stood up in terror, while the handsome Lappara, motionless and confused, without even the strength to rally from his embarrassed position, fixed his eyes on the flowers on the carpet in order not to look at the patron. Their guilt was proved.

" *Canaille !* " gasped Roumestan, choked with that kind of fury in which the wild beast roars within the man, making him long to tear and bite rather than strike.

He found himself out of doors, hardly knowing how, carried away by the fear of his own violence. At the same place and at the same hour, a few days before, his wife like himself had received this blow of treachery, and was wounded by a low insult as cruel and unmerited as his ; but he did not think of it a moment, being filled with indignation at the personal injury. Never under the sun had such villany been known ! This Lappara whom he loved as a son, and that jade for whom he had sacrificed even his political fortune !

" *Canaille, canaille !* " he repeated aloud in the deserted street, in a fine penetrating rain, which, more than the best reasoning, calmed him.

" *Zé*, but I am wet to the skin ! "

He ran to the carriage-stand in the Rue Amsterdam, and, in the crowd made in that district by the constant arrivals from the station, ran into the stiff shirt-bosom of the General and Marquis d'Espaillon.

" Bravo, my dear colleague ! I was not at the session ; but they told me that you charged like a *b*—— through the line and with all your forces." The old man, who held his umbrella as straight as a lath, had the glaring eye of a demon and the curled beard of a lady-killer.

"*N—— d—— D—— !*" he added, leaning over, and speaking into Numa's ear in a tone of light confidence. "You are the one to boast of knowing something about women."

And as Numa looked at him, believing him to be sarcastic, he added, —

"Well, you remember our discussion about love? You were right, — only curled darlings can please the fair ones. I have one now. I was never before entrapped, *F—— n—— d—— D—— !* not even when I left school at twenty-five."

Roumestan, who was listening with his hand on the door of the hack, tried to smile on the old libertine, but made only a frightful grimace. His theories about women were so strangely upset! They do not seek in a lover glory and genius. He felt dumbfounded and disgusted, and longed to weep, then to sleep that he might think no more, and, above all, no longer see the stupid smile of that wretch who stood straight before him convicted and thrilled by the interrupted kiss. But in our days of trouble the hours stand still, or toss about like the waves. Instead of the pleasant rest which he expected to find on returning home, a new blow awaited him in a despatch, which Méjean had opened in his absence, and now held out to him with great emotion.

Hortense is dying. She wishes to see you. Come at once.

AUNT PORTAL.

All his frightful selfishness was expressed in a desolate cry: "I shall lose true devotion in her." Then he thought of his wife present in the dying hour, and allowing aunt Portal to sign the despatch. Her rancor did not give way, and probably would not. If she were willing, how-

ever, how gladly, cured of his imprudent follies, he would have begun over again at her side an honest, family, almost austere life ! And, no longer thinking of the trouble he had caused, he reproached her for her severity, as if it were an injustice. He spent the night in correcting the proofs of his speech, stopping to write draughts of furious or ironical and scolding, hissing letters to that wretch of an Alice Bachellery. Méjean was also sitting up late in the secretary's office, a prey to sorrow, and seeking forgetfulness in desperate work ; and Numa, tempted by his being near, felt it a real torture not to be able to confide his disappointment to him. But he would have had to confess that he returned to Alice and the ridiculous *rôle* he played.

He did not continue in it, however ; and in the morning, when the chief of his cabinet accompanied him to the station, he gave him, among other instructions, the charge of dismissing Lappara. "Oh ! he expects it. I caught him in an act that proved the blackest ingratitude. And to think how kind I was, even to try to make " — He stopped short. He came near telling the lover that he had twice promised the hand of Hortense. Without further explanation he declared that he did not again wish to meet so sadly immoral a person at the ministry. Besides, the duplicity of the world sickened him. Ingratitude and selfishness ! it was enough to make him give up honors, business, and every thing, and leave Paris, and be the keeper of a light-house on some wild rock in the broad ocean.

"You have slept poorly, my dear patron," said Méjean in his quiet way.

"No, no ! it is just as I tell you : Paris gives me a nausea."

As he stood on the steps when departing, he turned round with a motion of disgust, and looked at the great city into which the provinces pour their ambitious and money-loving population, their boiling, uncleanly overflow, who accuse it afterwards of waywardness and corruption. He paused, overcome with a fit of bitter laughter.

“Do you think that fellow will pursue me everywhere?”

At the corner of the Rue de Lyon, on a large wall pierced with ugly dormer-windows, high up on the second story in a hideous pulp of blue, yellow, and green, in which the gestures of the presuming victorious tambourinist were still outlined, was seen a pitiable troubadour washed by all the dampness of winter and the waste water from a house of poor people.

Parisian advertising posters quickly follow one another, one covering the other. But when they are so very large as this, one part always remains uncovered. For a fortnight, in every quarter of Paris, the gaze of the minister met an arm, a leg, a piece of the cap or of the peaked shoe, which pursued and threatened him, as in the Provençal legend, where the victim, being cut in pieces and scattered about, still cries out to his murderer from his fragments. Here it stood out as a whole; and the gloomy coloring dimly seen in the chilly morning, and condemned to suffer every stain before being torn to pieces by a last gust of wind, very well pictured the fate of the unhappy troubadour, passing his life forever in the lowest of Parisian society, which he could no longer leave, still leading the *farandole*, which was now recruited from the waifs of society, exiles, and madmen, and from those in pursuit of glory, whom the hospital, the common ditch, or dissecting-table await.

Roumestan entered the car, chilled to the bones by this

apparition and the cold of a sleepless night, and shivering as he looked out of the carriage-doors on the sad views in the neighborhood ; on iron bridges across streaming streets ; on high houses, and hovels of poverty with their innumerable windows stuffed with rags ; on those dull, wan, sordid faces of people who clasped their arms over their bosoms to conceal or to keep themselves warm ; on inns with every kind of a sign ; and on a forest of factory-chimneys emitting smoke. Then came the first orchards of the suburbs black with compost, low mud huts, and villas shut up in their gardens, which looked narrower in winter, with bushes as dry as the bare wood of the kiosks and trellises. Farther on were roads, with pools in hollow places, into which poured overflowing cisterns ; and beyond, the horizon was the color of rust ; and flocks of ravens flew across the deserted fields. He closed his eyes to this harsh winter of the North, which the whistle of the cars pierced with long cries of distress ; but his thoughts behind his closed eyelids were not more smiling.

They were with that jade, the tie between whom and himself still oppressed his heart. He thought of what he had done for her, and what it cost him to maintain a star for six months. Every thing in a theatrical life is false, especially success, which is worth only what one pays for it. Expenses of the *claque*, tickets to dinners, receptions, presents to reporters, and every form of advertising, magnificent bouquets with which the artist blushing loads her arms, and the ovations during the theatrical tour, escorts to the hotel, serenades on the balcony, and continual excitements to rouse the public from their dull indifference, — all had to be paid for, and very dearly.

For six months he kept an open purse, never bargain-

ing about his triumphs with the little one. He was present at meetings with the chief of the *claque*, the advertising agents of newspapers, and flower-girls, whose bouquets the singer and her mother, by changing the ribbons, altered three times without saying a word to him. These Jewesses from Bordeaux had a sordid rapacity, and a fondness for what is expedient, which led them to remain at home for days, shabbily dressed, with morning jackets over flounced skirts, and old ball-shoes on their feet. In this attire Numa generally found them, sitting down to play cards, and swearing at each other like clowns. For a long time they had felt no restraint with him. He knew all the tricks and pretences of the *diva*, her natural coarseness as an affected, untidy woman of the South, that she was ten years older than she represented in the green-room, and that, to fix her eternal smile like a cupid's bow, she slept every evening with her lips drawn up at the corners and covered with coralline.

Thinking of these things, Numa also fell asleep, but not with his mouth like a bow, I swear to you, but, on the contrary, with his features drawn with disgust and fatigue, and all his body shaken by the swaying and jolts of a train speeding along at full steam.

"Valeince ! Valeince !"

He opened his eyes like a child roused by the well-known voice of a mother. They were already in the South, and the sky receded into blue depths between clouds driven by the wind. A sunbeam warmed the window-pane, and brightened the slender olive-trees growing among the pines. A feeling of calm pervaded the whole being of the Southerner, and there was a change of zone in his ideas. He regretted having been

so hard to Lappara. Why destroy the poor fellow's future, and make a whole family desolate? For a fancy, as Bompard said. The way to repair it was by removing the appearance of disgracefully leaving the ministry, by giving a cross. The minister burst into laughter at the idea of Lappara's name in the "Officiel" with this mention, "exceptional services." It was really one, after all, since he had delivered his chief from a degrading *liaison*.

"Orange! Montélimart and Nougat!" Voices rang, and were made emphatic by lively gestures. The waiters from refreshment-rooms, newsboys, and gate-keepers were hurrying about, their eyes starting from their heads. They were a very different people from thirty leagues above; and the broad Rhône with waves like a sea sparkled in the sunlight which gilded the scalloped ramparts of Avignon, where the bells, which had been ringing since they left Rabelais, saluted with their clear tones the great man of the Provence. Numa seated himself at table in the refreshment-room, before a roll, mushrooms, and a bottle of the wine from Nerte, which had ripened between stones, and which would enable even a Parisian to give the accent of the people from the Landes. But his native air most enlivened him, when, after leaving the double track at Tarascon, he took a seat in the small patriarchal car on a single track, which goes to the centre of Provence, where the road is overhung with mulberry and olive trees, and clumps of reeds graze the doors. There was singing in every car; and they stopped every second to let a drove of animals pass, to take on a belated passenger, or to take a package which some boy would bring on the run from his cottage. And the people bowed and chatted with farmer-women in the Arles head-dress, who stood on their doorstep, or were washing

at the stone well. At the stations there was shouting and jostling, as some conscript or some girl going to the city into service was escorted to the cars.

"*Té, vé!* going without saying good-by, *mignote*; be sure and be very good."

They weep and embrace, without paying attention to the hermit beggar in a hood, who mutters his "pater" as he leans against the gate, and, furious at receiving nothing, draws up his bag and moves away.

"Another 'pater' wasted!"

The remark is heard, tears are dried, and every one laughs, the monk louder than the rest. Roumestan, drawing back in his *coupé* to escape the ovations, delighted in this beautiful humor, and in the sight of the brown arched faces lighted with passion, and in the irony of the tall fellows with peacock airs; and in the *chato* clear as the long seeds of the muscadine grape, which become black and dry in the sun, watched over by grandmothers, who shake off the dust of the tomb in every gesture of their withered arms; and the exclamations, "*Zou,*" and "Come," and "Go ahead," of every one. He once more saw his own people, his mobile, nervous Provence, a race of brown crickets, always at the door and always singing. He himself was their perfect prototype, having already become cured of his great despair of the morning, his disgust and love being swept away by the first breath of the mistral, which roared in the valley of the Rhône, lifting the train and preventing it from going on, driving and tossing every thing, and bending trees in an attitude of flight, making the Alpilles recede, and sending sudden eclipses over the sun. In the distance the town of Aps, in the flickering sunlight, stood with its houses grouped around the foot of the

ancient tower of the Antonines, as a herd of cattle huddle together around the oldest bull in the broad Camargue, to make head against the wind.

Numa entered the station amid all this roar and excitement of the mistral. The family, through a feeling of delicacy which he shared, had kept his arrival secret, in order to avoid choral societies, banners, and solemn deputations. Aunt Portal, pompously seated in the arm-chair of the station-master, with a foot-warmer at her feet, was the only one who came to meet him. As soon as the stout lady perceived her nephew, her rosy face, which was beaming in repose, wore a desolate expression, and began to quiver under her coils of white hair. Holding out her arms, she burst into sobs and lamentations.

"Woe upon us! what misfortune is ours! Such a pretty child, *péchière!* and so good! and so sweet! One would share one's last crust with her."

"My God! is it over?" thought Roumestan, brought back to the purpose of his journey.

The aunt checked her lamentations to say in a hard, cold tone to the servant, who forgot the foot-warmer, "Ménicle, the foot-warmer!" Then, in a tone of frenzied grief, she continued to give in detail the virtues of Mlle. Le Quesnoy, calling loudly upon heaven and the angels to answer why they had not taken her in the place of that child, and in her groaning outburst shaking Numa's arm, on which she leaned to walk to her carriage with the slow movement of a funeral procession. The horses moved slowly, in a whirlwind of twigs and dry bark which the mistral flung down as a litter for the illustrious traveller, beneath the bare trees in the Avenue Berchère. At a turn where porters were accustomed to unharness, Ménicle was obliged to crack his whip several

times, his horses were so surprised at the indifference shown the great man. Roumestan thought only of the horrible news which he had just heard ; and holding the two doll-like hands of the aunt, who continued to wipe her eyes, he asked softly, —

“When did it happen?”

“What, pray?”

“When did the poor child die?”

Aunt Portal gave a bound on her pile of cushions.

“Die? *Bou Diou!* Who told you she was dead?” And then she immediately added with a sigh, “She won’t last long, *pechère.*”

Oh, no ! not long. Now she no longer rose, or left the pillows trimmed with lace, on which her little emaciated face, with a hectic flush on the cheeks, and bluish shadows around her eyes and nostrils, every day became more unrecognizable. With her ivory hands extended on the sheets, and near her a small comb and mirror, that she might from time to time smooth her beautiful brown hair, she remained for hours without speaking on account of hoarseness, with her eyes wandering to the dazzling sky and to the tops of the trees in the old garden of the Portal mansion. This evening in the sunset glow, which filled the room with a purplish light, she remained so long in her dreamy, motionless state that her sister, becoming anxious, asked, —

“Are you asleep?”

Hortense shook her head, as if to drive away some thought.

“No, I was not sleeping ; and yet I was dreaming, dreaming that I was going to die. I was just on the borders of this world, leaning over towards the other, leaning over, and about to fall. I still saw you and parts of

my room ; but I was already on the other side, and I was struck by the silence among the living after the great noise made by the dead, a sound like that of a beehive, a swarming, a fluttering of wings, and a roaring such as the sea leaves in big shells, as if the world of the dead were peopled and crowded like that of the living. And it was so powerful that it seemed to me that my ears heard for the first time, and that I was discovering a new sense."

She spoke slowly, with her hoarse, hissing voice. Then, after a pause, she resumed, with all the spirit the sad, broken instrument preserved, —

"My mind is always wandering. 'First prize for imagination, Hortense Le Quesnoy of Paris!'"

A sob, deadened by the sound of a door, was heard.

"You see," said Rosalie, "mamma has gone : you caused her pain."

"I do it on purpose, — a little every day, that she may feel less at one time," answered the young girl in a low voice.

The mistral went galloping through the corridors of the old provincial house, groaning under doors and shaking them furiously. Hortense smiled.

"Do you hear?" she said. "Oh ! I love it. It seems as if I were far away in distant countries. Poor darling," she added, taking her sister's hand, and carrying it with an exhausted movement to her mouth. "What a bad turn I have unwittingly done you ! your little one will belong to the South, and through my fault. You will never forgive me, *Franciote*."

Suddenly, above the noise of the wind, a whistle from a locomotive reached her ears, and made her start.

"Ah ! the seven-o'clock train."

Like all invalids and captives, she was familiar with the slightest sounds around her, and mingled them in her motionless life together with the horizon opposite, the pine woods, and the old crumbling Roman tower on the hill. From this moment she became anxious and agitated, and watched the door, at which a maid finally appeared.

"It is well," said Hortense quickly, smiling at her sister. "Will you let me be alone a moment? I will call you."

Rosalie believed a priest was coming to see her, with his parish Latin and terrifying consolations. She went down into the garden, a Southern enclosure, with paths bordered with box, and shaded by tall cypresses, but without flowers. Since she had become a nurse, she came here to get a breath of air, and hide her tears, and to relax the nervous tension caused by grief. Oh! how well she now understood what her mother said: "The loss of those we love is the only irreparable misfortune." Her other sorrows, and the wreck of her happiness as a wife, all vanished before this one. She thought only of this fearful, inevitable event, coming nearer every day. Was it the hour of the day, or the red fugitive sun which left the garden in the shadow, and lingered on the windows of the house, or the plaintive wind sighing overhead, which one heard without feeling, which caused her to feel an inexpressible sadness and anguish for her Hortense, who was more than a sister, almost a daughter, to her, and made her anticipate the joys of maternity? Sobs choked her, but no tears fell. She would have liked to cry out, and call for aid; but on whom? Heaven, to which the despairing turn their eyes, was so high, so far, so cold, and looked as if the hurricane had polished it.

A flock of pilgrim birds were hastening to it, whose cries and the movement of whose wings as they soared could not be heard. Was it possible for a voice from earth to reach those silent, chilling depths?

She tried, however; and, with her face turned to the light which was rising to disappear on the eaves of the old roof, she prayed to Him who has pleased to hide himself to find shelter from our griefs and laments; him whom some adore with confidence, with their brows to the ground, and whom others seek in despair, with arms outstretched, or threaten, with uplifted fists rebelliously clinched, or deny him that they may excuse his severity, — and this blasphemy and denial still is prayer.

She was summoned to the house, and ran in shuddering, having reached that state of anxious fear in which the slightest noise startled her to the depths of her being. The invalid, with a smile, drew her to her bed, having no longer strength or voice, as if she had just been talking for a long time.

“I have one favor to ask of you, my darling. You know the last favor which is granted to one doomed to die. Forgive your husband. He has been very wicked, and unworthy of you; but be indulgent, and return to him. Do this for me, sister, and for our parents, whom your separation grieves, and who will need to have all to cling to them, and surround them with affection. Numa is so full of life that no one can cheer them like him. You will do it, will you not? You forgive?”

Rosalie answered, “I promise.” What was the sacrifice of her pride compared to the irreparable misfortune? Standing near the bed, she closed her eyes a second to hold back the tears. A trembling hand was placed in hers. He stood there before her, moved and pitiable,

and tormented by a desire to pour out the feelings he dared not express.

“Embrace,” said Hortense.

Rosalie leaned forward her forehead, which Numa timidly touched with his lips.

“No, no, not like that ; in each other’s arms, as when one loves.”

Numa drew his wife to him with a deep sob, while night fell in the dark room in pity for her who had brought them heart to heart. It was her last manifestation of life. From that moment she remained absorbed, absent, and indifferent to all that passed around her, and made no answer to the sorrowful farewells to which there is no answer, and retained on her youthful face the dull, haughty rancor of those who, longing to live, die too soon, and to whom disillusion has not said farewell.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BAPTISM.

THE great day in Aps is Monday, the market-day. Long before dawn the broad deserted roads leading from Arles and Avignon to the town, in which the dust lies as quietly as a fall of snow, become lively with the rumbling of slow carts, the cackling of hens in their cages, and the barking of leaping dogs, and the rushing sound like a rain-storm made by the passing of a flock of sheep, among which the shepherd moved with long swaying motions, borne along by the bounding flock rolling on like waves. The drovers hoarsely shouting, and running breathlessly after their beasts, the dull thud of the cudgel on their rough sides, and riders armed with pitchforks are lost to sight and sound as they grope along under the portals of the ramparts, whose embrasures festoon the starry sky. They fill the *Cours* which surrounds the sleeping town, which at this hour resumes its character of an ancient Roman and Saracen city, with its irregular roofs and pointed towers rising above crumbling, tottering stairways. The confused murmur at the entrance of these sleepy men and beasts ceases; and they noiselessly file between the silvery trunks of the big plane-trees, and overflow the street, and even the yards of the houses, bearing with them warm odors from litters, and the aroma of herbs and ripe fruit. Then when the town awakens, it finds itself filled everywhere by a large, lively, and

noisy market, as if the whole rural Provence, with men and beasts, fruit and seeds, had risen and come upon them like a flood in the night.

It then affords a wonderful glimpse of rural wealth, varying according to the season. In places appointed by immemorial custom, oranges, pomegranates, and golden quinces, sensitive sorbs, and green and yellow melons are piled in flat baskets, and in stacks by the thousands; peaches, figs, and grapes are crushed in their express-baskets, by the side of bags of vegetables. The sheep, little kids, and the smooth rosy pigs have a listless look behind the fences of their enclosures. Yoked oxen walk before their purchaser, and bulls with smoking nostrils pull at the iron ring which fastens them to the wall. Farther on, little Camargue and degenerate Arabian horses, with their brown, white, or red manes mingled together, were leaping about, and, in answer to their names, *Ti*, Lucifer, *Ti*, L'Estérel, ran to eat oats from the hand of their helpers, who were true *gauchos* of the pampas, booted half-way up their legs. Then there were fowls in pairs, with their red claws tied up, chickens and guinea-fowl beating the ground with their wings as they lay in a row at the feet of market-women. Then, in the fish-market, there were live eels on fennel, trout from the Sorgue and Durance, the rainbow hues of their glistening scales mingling in their death agony. Finally, at the extreme end of the market, in a dry winter-forest, were wooden shovels, forks, and rakes of white, new wood standing between carts and harrows.

On the other side, against the rampart, unharnessed carriages with dusty wheels stood in two rows. In the open space the crowd with difficulty stir and move around, hail each other, discuss and bargain in various

accents ; the refined, affected, Provençal accent, which requires turns of the head and shoulders, and bold mimicry, and that of the Languedoc, which is harder and heavier, and has an almost Spanish articulation. From time to time, there was a movement among felt hats, Arlesian or peasant headdresses, and a crowding and pushing among the large number of buyers and sellers, who moved aside at the shouts of the driver of some belated cart, who with a great effort made his way through the crowd. The *bourgeoise* city was made to seem little, and felt great disdain towards the rural invasion, on which, however, its originality and fortune depend. From morning until evening they walk the streets, and stop at the harnessmakers, shoemakers, and clockmakers, to gaze at the *jacquemards* of the town-house, and the windows of stores, being as dazzled by the gilding and plate-glass as were the drovers of Theocritus before the palace of the Ptolemies.

Some come out from apothecaries, laden with bundles and large bottles ; others, a wedding-party, enter a jeweller's to select, after shrewd bargaining, ear-rings, with long pendants, and a necklace for the bride. The rustic skirts, and shy, sunburnt faces, with their eager, busy look, remind one of some Vendean town captured by the Royalists in the time of the great wars.

This morning, the third Monday of February, there was a lively, dense crowd, as in the finest summer days, which a cloudless sky glowing with warm sunlight made it resemble. People were standing in groups, talking and gesticulating ; but the conversation turned not so much on buying and selling as on an event which suspended trade, and caused every eye and face, even the staring eyes of the animals and the anxious ears of the little

Camargue horses, to turn towards the church of Saint Perpetua. The news had just spread through the market, where it caused an extraordinary rise, that this very day Numa's boy, the little Roumestan, whose birth three weeks before had been received with transports of joy in Aps and all the provincial South, was to be baptized.

Unfortunately the baptism, having been delayed on account of the deep mourning in the family, must for the same reason be kept somewhat private; and had it not been for a few old sorceresses from the country of Baux, who station themselves every Monday on the steps of Saint Perpetua with a small market of aromatic herbs and dried and fragrant medicinal herbs gathered in the Alpilles, the ceremony would probably have passed unnoticed. On seeing aunt Portal's carriage stop before the church, the old market-women gave the news to the dealers in *aiets*, who display their shining strings everywhere, from one end of the *Cours* to the other. The dealers in *aiets* notified the fish-women, and soon all the bustle and noise of the market poured into the little street which leads to the church. They crowded around Ménicle, who, in deep mourning, with crape on his arm and hat, sat up straight on the box, silently answering questions by an indifferent play of his shoulders. In spite of every thing they persisted in waiting, standing crowded and smothered beneath the streamers, the boldest mounted on posts, and the eyes of every one fixed on the great door, which finally opened.

There was a prolonged "Ah!" such as is heard at a display of fireworks, triumphant but modulated, then checked by the appearance of a tall old man dressed in black, who looked very sad and dismal for a godfather. Mme. Portal was leaning on his arm, and looked very

proud at having been a godmother with the first president, and at having her name by the side of his on the parish register. She, however, looked sober on account of her recent affliction and the sad feelings recalled by the church. There was disappointment in the crowd at the sight of this solemn couple who followed the great man of Aps, who was also in black, and chilled by the loneliness and coldness of this baptism between four tapers, without other music than the cries of the little fellow, on whose unfeathered, bird-like pate the lustral water caused the most disagreeable sensation. But the appearance of a hearty-looking, broad, heavy nurse, bedecked with ribbons like an agricultural-fair prize, and with the bright little bundle of white lace and embroidery across her shoulder, dispelled the sadness of the spectators, and sent up a new cry like that caused by a sky-rocket, and joy was manifested by one to another in a thousand enthusiastic exclamations : —

"Lou vaqui ! there he is ! see, see !"

Roumestan, surprised, with eyes dazzled and blinking in the sunlight, stopped a minute on the high steps to look at the blackamoor faces and the sheep-like crowding of a black flock from which the strongest affection was expressed for him ; and, although accustomed to ovations, he felt one of the strongest emotions of his life as a public man, a proud intoxication, which a new and thrilling sentiment of paternity ennobled. He was about to speak, then remembered that this was not the proper place.

"Get in, nurse," he said to the quiet Burgundy woman, whose ox-like eyes looked bewildered ; and, while with her light burden she disappeared in the carriage, he told Ménicle to drive home quickly by the cross-road.

"No, no ! the main road ! the main road !" was the answer of the bystanders, given with a great outburst.

This meant that he must go the length of the fair-grounds.

"The main road !" said Roumestan after glancing consultingly at his father-in-law, for whom he would have liked to avoid the joyous excitement.

The carriage started, with a heavy creaking of its old frame, entered the street, then the *Cours*, amidst the hurrahs of the crowd, which became excited at its own shouting, and reached a delirious enthusiasm, and at every moment blocked the horses and wheels. The windows being lowered, they went at a walk, amid acclamations, lifted hats, and waving of handkerchiefs, and the odors and warm breaths from the market reaching them as they passed. The women leaned their eager bronzed faces forward into the carriage ; and the mere sight of the baby's cap caused them to exclaim, —

"*Diou ! lou bèu drôle !* Heavens ! what a beautiful child !"

"He resembles his father, *qué ?*"

"He already has his Bourbon nose and fine manners."

"Show your face, darling ! show your pretty boy face !"

"He is as pretty as an egg !"

"You could drink him up in a glass of water !"

"*Té*, my treasure !"

"My young partridge !"

"My little lamb !"

"My little guinea-fowl !"

"My fine pearl !"

They devoured him with the light of their brown eyes ; and he, a child a month old, was not at all frightened. Stirred by the hubbub, and supported by a cushion with

pink ribbons, and with two drops of milk in the corner of his lips, he looked quietly on with his cat's eyes, whose pupils were fixed and dilated. He was visibly pleased at the sight of the heads at the carriage-doors, and at the increasing noise, in which soon were mingled the bellowing, roaring, and screeching of the animals, who were nervously imitating the people. There was a general *mêlée* of extended necks, and open mouths and jaws of beasts, opening to pour forth hideous noises to the glory of Roumestan and his progeny. Even then, while all in the carriage held their hands to their shattered ears, the little man remained impassive; and this coolness amused even the old president, who said, —

“If I do not mistake, he is born for the forum.”

They hoped to be free on leaving the market; but the crowd followed them, increased by the weavers on the new road, and companies of warpers and porters from the Avenue Berchère. Merchants ran out on the steps of their stores, and the balcony of the Club des Blancs was filled with people; and soon choral societies, with banners, poured out into every street, performing choruses with a flourishing of trumpets, as on the arrival of Numa, only the present ovation was gayer and more impromptu, and unlike an ordinary festival.

In the best room of the Portal mansion, whose white wood and flame-colored silk dated a century back, Rosalie lay in an easy-chair, her eyes wandering from the empty cradle to the deserted, sunny street; for she was becoming impatient for her child's return. On her delicate, bloodless features, sunken with fatigue and tears, but which nevertheless expressed a certain happy composure, could be read the story of her life for the past few months, — her anxiety and grief, her rupture with Numa, the

death of Hortense, and, finally, the birth of her child, which caused every thing else to be forgotten.

When this great happiness came to her, she did not count upon it, being broken down by so many blows, and believing herself incapable of giving life. In the last days she fancied she could not even feel the impatient starts of the little imprisoned being ; and, the cradle and *layette* being ready, she hid them through a superstitious fear, only telling her English nurse, "If you are asked for the child's clothes, you will know where to find them."

To abandon one's self to a bed of torture, with closed eyes and clenched teeth, for long hours, broken every five minutes by a heart-rending cry, and forced to submit to one's destiny as a victim whose joys must be dearly paid for, is nothing when hope is at the end ; but to expect one's illusions to be finally destroyed, — the last grief in which the almost animal moans of the woman are mingled with the sobs of disappointed maternity, — what frightful martyrdom !

In the depth of her exhaustion she kept repeating, "He is dead, he is dead," when she heard a voice attempting to breathe and cry, — the call for light of the child being born. She answered it, and oh ! with what overflowing tenderness, —

"My babe !"

He was living. They brought him to her. This short-breathed, dazzled, bewildered little being was hers. This bit of flesh united her to life ; and, by merely holding him against herself, a sensation of comforting coolness was imparted to her feverish body. No more mourning and misery. Her child, her boy, the desire and regret which she had endured for ten years, and made her eyes burn with tears when she looked at the children of others, the

babe which she had kissed in advance on so many pretty rosy cheeks, was there before her, and caused her a new delight and surprise every time that she leaned over from her bed to the cradle, and drew aside the muslin curtains over the sleeping infant, whose breathing was hardly audible as it lay curled up. She wished to have him near her all the time. When he was taken out, she was anxious, and counted the minutes; but never with more anguish than on this morning of the baptism.

"What time is it?" she asked every moment. "How late they are! Dear me! how long they have been gone!"

Mme. Le Quesnoy remained near her daughter, and re-assured her, though she felt somewhat troubled herself; for this first and only grandchild was very dear to the heart of the grandparents, and brightened their mourning with hope.

A distant, rumbling noise drawing near increased the anxiety and impatience of the two women.

They go to the window to look out and listen. There is singing and firing and noise and the ringing of bells. Suddenly the English nurse, looking out, exclaims, —

"Madame, it is on account of the baptism."

This noisy mob, howling like savages around the war-post, was on account of the baptism.

"Oh, this South, this South!" repeated the young mother, alarmed. She trembled lest they smother her babe in the hubbub. But no: here he is alive and full of vigor, shaking his little short arms, and with his eyes wide open. He wears the baptismal robe of the other child, which Rosalie herself embroidered and trimmed; and she now has two boys — the dead and the living — in one.

"He did not cry or need to be nursed once all the

way ! " said aunt Portal, who was relating in her imaginative style the triumphant tour of the town, while doors slammed in the old hotel, — which was again filled with ovations, — and while the servants ran out on the porch, and gave lemonade to the musicians. Trumpets sounded, and the windows rattled. M. and Mme. Le Quesnoy went down into the garden to get away from the sounds of mirth which pained them ; and as Roumestan went out on the balcony to speak to the people, aunt Portal and the English Polly went quickly into the parlor to hear him.

"Will madame please hold the baby?" asked the Nounou, curious as a savage ; and Rosalie was quite happy to be alone with her child in her lap. From her window she could see the bright banners fluttering in the wind, and the dense crowd hanging on the words of their great man. Some of his words reached her at times ; but she heard above all the *timbre* of his winning, moving voice, and a shiver of pain passed over her at the recollection of all the trouble that had come to her from the eloquent tongue which could lie and deceive so easily. Now it was over : she felt protected from disappointment and wounds. She had a child : her dreams and ambitions were realized. And, making a shield of the dear little creature whom she pressed across her bosom, she questioned him softly, close in his ear, as if she sought an answer or resemblance in this little chubby face with its small features, which seemed hollowed out like wax that bears the impress of a kiss, and already indicated a sensual, violent mouth, with an arched nose which betokened a love of adventures, and a weak, square chin : —

"Will you also be a liar? Will you pass your life in betraying others and yourself, and breaking innocent

hearts which have done you no harm but to believe in you and love you? Will you be inconstant and cruel, taking life like a virtuoso and a singer of cavatins? Will you trade in words, without troubling yourself about their worth and whether they represent your thought, if they only are brilliant and sound well?"

And holding her mouth to the little ear surrounded by little soft down, and kissing it, she asked, —

"Will you be a little Roumestan, say?"

The orator in the balcony was becoming exalted, and was reaching the highest degree of eloquence, in which one could hear only the parting words accented in Southern style, "My soul . . . my blood . . . morals . . . religion . . . my country," made emphatic by the cheers of his hearers, who were made in his image, and whom he represented in his traits and vices, the effervescent, mobile South, tumultuous as a billowy sea, and each wave representing himself.

There was a final hurrah, then the crowd moved slowly away. Roumestan returned to his room, wiping his forehead. Intoxicated by his triumph, and warmed by the inexhaustible affection of the people, he approached his wife, and kissed her with sincere feeling. He felt kindly towards her, and tender as in their early married life, and had neither remorse nor harsh feeling.

"*Bé!* did you think your son was to be so *fêted*?"

Kneeling before the lounge, the great man of Aps played with his child, and sought the little fingers which caught hold of every thing, and the little feet kicking the air. Rosalie looked at him, and her brow contracted as she tried to study his contradictory, incomprehensible nature. Suddenly, as if she had solved a riddle, she asked, —

“What is that proverb you have here which aunt Portal gave the other day? ‘Joy of the street,’ what is it?”

“Oh, yes! ‘*Gau de carriero, doulou d’oustau*,’ — joy of the street, sorrow of the home.”

“That is it,” she said, with strong emotion. Then, letting the words fall one by one as if they were dropping into an abyss, she slowly repeated, expressing in it the lament of her life, this proverb which describes in words a whole race: —

“Joy of the street, sorrow of the home.”

THE END.

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